

Christian Orient

ISSN 0258 - 1744

September

1989

Property of
Graduate Theological Union

FEB 22 1990

SPIRITUALITY

EDITORIAL

THE SPIRITUAL VISION OF VARTHAMANAPPUSTHAKAM

Kathanar Thomas Koonammakkel

SPIRITUALITY OF THE SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH

Varghese Pathikulangara CMI

RELIGIONS OF INDIA AND RELIGIO-CULTURAL INTERACTION

Mar Abraham Mattam

BOOK REVIEWS, NEWS

CHRISTIAN ORIENT

An Indian Journal of Eastern Churches for Creative
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September

Vol. X

No. 3

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Manuscripts and Book Reviews are to be sent to the **Managing Editor, Christian Orient Trust**, P. B. 1. Vadavathoor, Kottayam - 686 010, Kerala, India.

Annual Subscription: Rs. 30/-; Foreign : \$ 20/- or DM 40 by air mail, \$ 15/ or DM 30 sea mail.

Single Copy: Rs. 10 (in India); \$ 7 or DM 10 or the equivalent (abroad)

Editorial

Liturgical Spirituality

Spirituality

Spirituality is defined or explained by various authors in diverse terms. Taking them into consideration, we may describe it as a *style of God experience*. Different religions, and even individual groups in them, practise and propose methods and techniques to achieve God experience in their own way. The respective faithful or adherents follow them scrupulously that they may arrive at such supreme experience of God.

Christians too have a particular style of God experience. They call it the Christian Spirituality. It is a style of experiencing God in Jesus Christ. Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me" (*Jn* 14,6). It is an important piece of divine revelation. Jesus of Nazareth, the God-Man, *Ammannu-El*, "the God with us", the given God, the incarnate God, God who has dwelt among men, the manifested God, God whom we could see, look upon, hear, touch and experience (1 *Jn* 1,1), is the unique contact person between God and man. No other possibility is given here on earth to get an experience of God, which is the life-fulfilment of every man.

Jesus Continues in the Church

Jesus of Nazareth lived two thousand years ago – a historical personality. The TWELVE were privileged to have a direct experience of him and on them is built up the living reality of the Church. Jesus said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me ... and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt* 28, 18-20). The Christ-event continues "to the close of the age". Any book on ecclesiology will definitely tell us that Church is the continuation of Jesus Christ in the present economy of salvation. Therefore, the possibility of experiencing Jesus of Nazareth and thus God himself is opened to every Christian here and now. How? Through a personal involvement in the life of the Church in all sincerity – by touching and experiencing Jesus Christ in and through the life of the Church.

Liturgy, the Life of the Church

Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on Sacred Liturgy proclaims: "... it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine Sacrifice of the Eucharist, 'the work of our redemption is accomplished', and it is through the liturgy, especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church" (Sc 2). This and similar teachings of the *Magisterium* and the Fathers, show that the true life of the Church is her *liturgical life*.

According to the Eastern understanding, *Liturgy* is the blue-print of the life of the Church; it is the transfiguring experience of the Mystery of

Christ in the Church; it is a celebration of what we are; a celebration where we proclaim the living and salvific traditions, and specialities of our Church; a celebration of what the Church is – her cosmic and eschatological realities.

Liturgy for Eastern Churches, is not merely a matter of obligation to be fulfilled under pain of mortal or venial sins; not merely a matter of a few externals, a few rites or prayers or sharing of a few ideas or ideologies; it is never considered to be an occasion for mere social exchange. It is not a business at all, namely, reciting a few prayers or performing certain rites or narrating certain incidents or even inducing others to do the same and acquire grace in return – this bartering system of Sacramental economy is foreign to any authentic Eastern heritage. If we are celebrating our Birthday or Patron's day only to receive gifts and presentations, what kind of celebration is it? A liturgical celebration which is intended only for getting grace projects exactly the same mentality.

In short, *Liturgy* in the East is an action of bringing down heaven on earth; it is the epiphany of heaven on earth; it is an action where the heaven and earth meet together – where the heavenly and earthly choirs mingle together. *Liturgy* is, in fact, a passage from this world to the other; it is an occasion to get liberated from the hurries and worries of this world – not an escape as a few think, but a liberation in its true biblical sense; it is, in fact, a practice for heavenly life. The Eastern liturgical traditions emphasize the need for self-transfiguration or *theosis* of man or divinization of man in order to achieve cosmic transformation, while the Western tradition thinks of bringing the whole cosmos into the presence of God in liturgy. Hence we find an emphasis on offertory procession (often an exaggerated emphasis) in the West, while it is unknown in the whole of Eastern Christendom.

Signs and Symbols in Liturgy

As it is already mentioned, *Liturgy* is not primarily recital of some prayers or singing of some devotional hymns, or giving some information and instruction to the faithful; but it is the proclamation of one's faith in the historical Jesus, in Christ-event, in the Church of today, through effective signs and symbols – signs and symbols related to Christ-event or historical Jesus, are of supreme importance in this context. No one in the Church has authority to play with such signs and symbols. "The priest as minister ... cannot consider himself a "proprietor" who can make free use of the liturgical text and of the sacred rite as if it were his own property, in such a way as to stamp it with his own arbitrary personal style" (DC 12),, says Pope John II.

Everybody in the Church is obliged in conscience to try his or her best to understand the meaning of signs and symbols used in the liturgy and thus through them touch and experience Jesus of Nazareth. "Priests must acquire an ever deeper understanding of the authentic way of looking at the Church of which the celebration of the liturgy and especially of the Mass (*Qurbana*) is the living expression. Without an adequate biblical training, priests will not be able to present to the faithful the meaning of the liturgy as an enactment, in signs, of the history of salvation" (ID 27) so runs the teaching of the *Magisterium*.

There is real difference in the approach to signs and symbols in the East and in the West. Most of the Magisterial documents lament over the Western insensibility to liturgical signs and symbols due to its enthusiastic pursuit after modernism, secularism, humanism and so on. Eastern traditions, like the Syro-Malabar Church, due to their thorough Westernization, are also influenced by such "isms". Hence the repeated warnings of the *Magisterium* against such influences.

Syro-Malabar Church

Syro-Malabar Church is the true heir of the Thomas Christians of India. The Thomas Christians of India belong to the only Apostolic heritage, namely, the Thomite or East Syriac or Chaldaic heritage, developed outside the *lines Romanus*. This Church had to live through severe trying vicissitudes in her history. She was thoroughly latinized and mutilated in and after the sixteenth century, during the so-called missionary period. During this historical huddles, she was wounded severely, very often accused and even her *identity* was smashed. Intentionally or not, her authentic *liturgical spirituality* was substituted with popular piety in the pattern of the medieval western Church. Her priestly formation became exclusively under the control of the Western missionaries. Thus a thoroughly latinized group of clergy and religious began to wield the destiny of this Church. Nobody can expect anything better from the Bishops and Religious Superiors selected from such a clerical and religious set up. They are all saints, perhaps, according to the Western system according to the norms of Western medieval popular piety; but having not much idea of the Eastern emphasis on *liturgical spirituality*.

They may spend hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, or for meditation, or for Charismatic prayer meetings, or for Novena celebrations, or monthly devotions, and the like; but find it difficult to spend half-an-hour for the Eucharistic celebration or 20 minutes for the Liturgy of the Hours. They may easily prefer rosary or way of the Cross or Bible Service or such popular devotions of personal interest even to the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office). What a paradox in an Eastern Church of Apostolic origin?

Holy See Intervening

It was in such a situation, namely, a situation where her own Bishops and Religious superiors latinizing and westernizing her more and more, that the Holy See began to intervene. Refusing approbation to the Syriac translation of the Latin Pontifical (submitted for approbation by the Syro-Malabar Bishops to the Congregation for Oriental Churches), His Holiness Pope Pius XI wrote: "Latinism ought not to be encouraged among the Orientals; the Holy See does not wish to latinize, but to Catholicize. Half measures are neither fruitful nor generous. Let a commission be nominated with the task of revising the most ancient Pontifical (of the Church), which could be printed part by part" (Report of the Plenary, Dec. 1, 1934).

The consistent efforts of the Holy see in restoring the *liturgical Spirituality* of the Syro-Malabar Church is to be really appreciated. But it could not reach the goal even to the present day because of the strong opposition from the part of several Syro-Malabar Bishops. The remark of the *Magisterium* is

relevant in this context: "Most of the difficulties encountered in putting into practice the reform of the liturgy and especially the reform of the Mass (*Qurbana*) stem from the fact that neither priests nor faithful have perhaps been sufficiently aware of the theological and spiritual reasons for which the changes have been made in accordance with the principles laid down by the Council" (ID 27). As one of the elderly Syro-Malabar Bishops remarked the difficulty in this Church is not only of the priests and faithful, but also of Bishops themselves.

Taking all such difficulties into consideration, the present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II personally reminded the Syro-Malabar Bishops: Difficulties will not be lacking in the field of returning to the genuine sources of one's own Rite. It is a question, nevertheless, of difficulties which must be faced *viribus unitis and Deo adjuvante*" (L'Osservatore Romano, August 30, 1980, p.2).

Present Situation

In spite of all such consistent admonitions of the Holy See, the difficulties still persist. The implementation of the finally approved text of the Eucharistic celebration is a clear norm for evaluating the level of *liturgical spirituality* in this Church.

The text was approved on December 19, 1985 and was inaugurated at Kottayam by the Holy Father himself on February 8, 1986. The Archdiocese of Changanacherry and dioceses of Palai and Kanjirapally began to use the text as soon as they got it. The credit goes to the liturgical Catechesis given in those dioceses even before the approval of the text. An instruction to that effect was given to the Syro-Malabar Bishops by the Congregation for Oriental Churches already in 1954 (Letter of May 6, 1954). It was repeated in 1980 in following words: "In the meantime, in order not to repeat the error of 1962 it will be necessary to prepare the clergy and the laity by means of an appropriate catechesis, to enable them to receive the revised text with favour, with intelligence and with real profit and so eliminate without difficulty the use of not approved texts" (W. Card. Rubin, Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches, on August 30, 1980).

Excluding a few individuals, both Bishops and priests, there was strong opposition to this approved and inaugurated text of the *Qurbana* in other dioceses. We cannot conceal the fact that the Congregation for Oriental Churches also played a little diplomacy in the meantime. It is perpetuated in the *Directives* given on May 5, 1988. But the congregation was also generous enough to rethink about its own directives and thus corrected itself through the *Modifications* given together with the *Decree* authorizing the Solemn and simple forms of Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*, on April 3, 1989.

According to this Decree of authorization, all were asked to use the restored text by July 3, 1989, the *Dukrana* of St. Thomas the Apostle. The common pastoral which the Bishops released in this connection is to be specially mentioned. That will surely help to promote *liturgical spirituality* in this individual Church. But when it came to the implementation each diocese began to show its own true colour.

The Diocese of Tellicherry must be considered the most excellent model in this case. The Bishops, priests, religious and laity there, have so beautifully

co-operated in implementing the Magisterial documents and directives on the restored and renewed Order of *Qurbana* according to its Oriental genius (cfr. *Grideepam*, August 1989, the official organ of this diocese). Hence they deserve praise and congratulation.

The Bishop of Kothamangalam has given authentic instructions to implement the directives in such a way as to help the revival of the *liturgical spirituality*. But a group of the clergy and religious there makes some resistance, primarily due to the difficulties mentioned above and then of the influence from the neighbouring dioceses.

The situation of other dioceses is, in deed, disheartening. The directives given in each of them will only destroy the *liturgical spirit* revived in the approved text. In several cases those individual directives are opposed to the mind of the Holy See, liturgical genius of this individual and apostolic Church and even the recent directives of the *Magisterium*. (cfr. The August 1989 issue of the official organs of Ernakulam, Irinjalakuda, Mananthavady, and so on; we could not refer to the Bulletins of other dioceses, but informations reaching us confirm the same).

What are explicitly suppressed in the *Modifications* given together with the *Decree* of authorizing the Solemn and Simple Forms of *Qurbana* on April 3, 1989 are enforced as law in those diocese! The *concession* or *dispensation* granted in those cases were only *ad tempus* and *in loco*, namely, "for as brief a time as is reasonably possible" and "in parishes where it has already been introduced" *Final Judgement*, given on July 24, 1985). This is the case with *versus populum* celebration. With regard to all other dispensations the same is true according to the *Final Judgement* and later Magisterial documents. No ecclesiastical authority below the Congregation for Oriental Churches has the power to decide against that and when such cases happen no one is obliged to follow them.

Why those who are not concerned with uniformity of celebration in the whole individual Church are anxious about uniformity in their own dioceses? If all the Bishops, as they have asked in the common pastoral letter, had directed their clergy and laity to follow scrupulously the directives and rubrics in the printed text of the *Qurbana*, there would have been marvelous uniformity of celebration in this Apostolic Church. But they themselves have forfeited that uniformity by giving contrary directives.

Several of the directives given in those dioceses are renewed latinization and westernization, which the *Magisterium* was discouraging consistently. We have already quoted the words of Pope Pius XI; on July 24, 1985, the Congregation for Oriental Churches repeated almost the same: "It has always been the Church's ideal that the different Rites be preserved in their authenticity and integrity and that they be cherished, observed and honoured with the greatest fidelity. Nor has the Holy See seen fit to accord authorization to reforms of lawful liturgical rites, whether by undue reduction or amplification or by misplaced imitation of other traditions, that are not consonant with the nature and spirit of the Rite concerned and not compatible with its appropriate and organic development" (cfr. covering letter of *Final Judgement*).

The Congregation emphasizes the need of such authentic liturgical texts in the same letter so that the Church may flourish in her own *liturgical spirituality*. "The availability of a text of the *Qurbana* will provide also a solid basis

for further reforms, which are badly needed and are overdue. The final aim is to offer the people of God, clergy and faithful of the Syro-Malabar Rite, a liturgy, substantial in content truly representative of the ecclesial tradition, and complete in all its parts; indeed, with a spirituality drawing its inspiration from the Bible and Liturgy. Without such a Spirituality, founded on a life filled with the Eucharist and other Sacraments, there cannot be renewal in depth" (*Ibid*). We may quote many similar instructions of the Holy See to the Syro Malabar Bishops. But for the length of this editorial we desist from doing so.

What is happening today in those dioceses is not only discouraging but even frustrating. Individuals are competing with each other in printing reduced and mutilated versions of the authorized text of the *Qurbana*. The authorities concerned are not intervening. We do not know whether they themselves side with such individuals and use such private texts for liturgical celebrations.

The *May, 5, 1988 Directives* of the Congregation for Oriental Churches speak about the *altar Missal* as follows: "As is traditional in the official books of all Rites there should be one single altar Missal for all the forms of the *Qurbana* (Raza, Solemn, Simple) containing the full text of the liturgy and all rubrics" (no. 9, b).

But such an *altar Missal* is unknown to most of the priests in several dioceses. The text made available to them contains only the Solemn and Simple forms of celebration. With such a text how can one be faithful to the admonition of the Congregation in the same *Directives*, such as: "There are three basic forms of *Qurbana*: Raza, Solemn, Simple. These are not rigid categories or structures, but normative models of varying degrees of solemnity, depending on the circumstances. Thus, for example a more Solemn *Qurbana* can include more elements of the Raza, even some of those designated as proper only to the Raza..." (nn 37-38). Hence we are forced to think of a serious and willed manipulation in the printing of the authorized Missal itself.

We do not know whether the involved ecclesiastical authorities have any occult sanction from above. If so, that must be made public in order to avoid misunderstanding and scandal. The Congregation for Oriental Churches also cannot remain silent when such irregularities happen in this individual Church. Partially it is due to the lack of clarity or vagueness of several recent directives from the Congregation. Anyhow, this apostolic Church is brought to a situation where sincerity and honesty are questioned. Those who are faithful and obedient to the Magisterial teachings and the authentic genius of their own Church are made scapegoats by their own Religious Superiors and Ecclesiastical Authorities. Is there no end to such persecutions and sufferings in the Church?

We are forced to repeat the *telegram*, sent by Very Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Elizeus Porukara, the illustrious and saintly successor of Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara, on February, 23, 1876, to the then Holy Father, since he could not suffer any longer the severe persecutions of the then Archbishop of Verapoly: "His Holiness the Pope Rome: Reply prepaid: Ten words: Vicars Monks Priests and People forward several petitions for separate Bishop: Therefore Archbishop ruins our convents persecutes severely: Can't suffer: Appoint us any Bishop except Verapoly and Quilon: Tilde cision: Prior" (ACO f. 400).

Then the *telegram* was against the Latin Bishops latinizing and persecuting the Syro-Malabar Church. Today we are forced to repeat the same *telegram* against our own Bishops and Religious Superiors, who latinize and westernize this Church.

Anyhow we feel that the Holy See has to speak out in clear terms. The liturgical matters cannot be left for so long in uncertainty and vague options. Already on May 22, 1979 His Eminence Paul Card. Philippe, the then Prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches wrote to His Eminence Joseph Card. Parecattil, the then President of the Syro-Malabar Bishops Conference as follows: "Your Eminence is well aware of the abuses and arbitrary usages which, under the specious pretext of conciliar reform, have lacerated the union of hearts and impoverished the Divine Worship, to the grave detriment of the unity and sanctity of the Church... The experimental phase, at one time granted and later prorogated, must be brought to an end. Any further prolongation, 'ad experimentum' will certainly be detrimental" (quoted in, Pathikulangara V., *Resurrection, Life and Renewal*, Bangalore - Kottayam 1982, p. 291).

Even after ten years, the same situation continues in the Syro-Malabar Church. If the Congregation for Oriental Churches finds it difficult to bring the situation under control and help this Church to restore and build up her own *liturgical spirituality*, the higher authority ought to intervene as early as possible.

We would also like to place on record a word of Thanks to one and all who have most willingly collaborated with us in bringing out this issue of *Christian Orient*. Among these, the contributors are to be specially remembered. *The Spiritual Vision of Varthamanappusthakam: History of an Unending Pilgrimage from the Desert into the Sea*, is the result of a new venture by Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar who hails from Ramapuram (from where Paremmakkal Thoma Kathanar, the author of 'Varthamanappusthakam' also hails) Palai diocese, Kottayam, Kerala. He took Licentiate in Patrology, Church History and B. A. in Syriac and at present is in Oxford doing his Doctoral research in Patrology. We hope that it will be a different area of information for our readers. Bishop Mar Abraham Mattam of Satna, India, is known to the *Christian Orient* readers through several of his articles. Here he leads us through a pioneer work of authentic inculturization. To both of them and to all other co-workers, most sincere thanks.

Dharmaram College
September 8, 1989
The Nativity of *Iso'-Māltha*

Editor
Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara CMI

The Spiritual Vision of Varthamanappusthakam:

History of an unending Pilgrimage from the Desert into the Sea

Introduction

Varthamanappusthakam was written by Kathanar Thomman paremmakkal in 1785.¹ As such it is a travel narrative; but this book contains important concepts of ecumenism and ecclesiology far ahead than those of

Vatican II.² Since no serious study has so far been made, it is still a 'condemned' and 'forbidden' book in the eyes of many.³ Three Carmelite Vicars Apostolic condemned it in 1862 with the tacit approval and support of Propoganda Fide. Fortunately it was edited four times in Malayalam

1. Paremmakkal himself writes so. Besides, we can prove from internal and textual evidence that it was written during the return journey. But when he started writing or finished, is unknown. The book as we have today is incomplete and it argues for a "second volume". But until we get more evidence what we can conclusively assert is that the book originally had at least a few more chapters which contained some very important details about the last days of their return journey. These last chapters did not form the "second volume." Most probably the "second volume" was an appendix of some documents, letters etc. Even if the "reflections" of Paremmakkal were absent from this "second volume" there is no reason why the author's appendix disappeared from the book. Some body removed these 'controversial' sections, and no other explanation fits in. Since this appendix contained original documents, letters, or their copies written by missionaries against the cause of Mar Thoma Nazranis, either missionaries themselves removed the appendix or some "pious" supporter of missionaries who was "scandalized" by these documents. There is good reason to believe that along with this appendix or second volume a few important sections from here and there 'disappeared' important of all the last chapter or chapters.
2. Cf. J. Kallaragatt, "The Ecclesiological Vision of Cariattil and Paremmakkal", *The Freedom Fighters of Thomas Christians* (ed. T. Vellulamthadam and J. Kurian), Kottayam 1986, pp. 42-58.
3. It was "necessary" to forbid and condemn this book because of the truth it exposed and because of the manner it was exposed. No dogmatic error nor heretic tendency is visible in it. The book became popular only after the death of the author and that is why some one could destroy some sections of the book.

within the last 75 years.⁴ Also an excellent English translation has been published from Rome.⁵ But we may need another century before we begin to appreciate Varthamanappusthakam and its author along with Mar Kariattil. Sooner we prepare ourselves to re-evaluate the troubled period of the past, greater the spiritual and ecclesiological harvest that awaits us. These great forefathers of Mar Thoma Nazranis⁶ have a message for us all. The present article is an attempt to grasp the spiritual vision envisaged and lived by Mar Paremmakkal and Mar Kariattil, as we read in Varthamanappusthakam. The apparent critical attitude of the book need not 'scandalize' anyone anymore. This 'forbidden' book is a treasury of spiritual insights! Urs von Balthasar writes;

"That the great upholders of christian spirituality ... not seldom feel themselves to be, and behave like, representatives of the ecclesiastical 'opposition', and have to take on themselves the corresponding fate of the exiled, the misunderstood, the outlawed

is not astonishing; rather it manifests in the main, a burning concern of the Church and of the theology..."⁷

What is Spiritual Life ?

The term 'spirituality' or 'spiritual life' is a misnomer. It is instead just the Christian life, and nothing more. 'Spirituality' is neither a necessary addition nor a secondary element in the ordinary baptized life. It is just the 'life in Christ', 'life with Christ', 'life for Christ'. In other words it is the life of the 'sons' in the 'Son'. Father, Son and Spirit is a communion. Apart from this communion there is no Christian (= spiritual) life. Christian life is a 'participation' in this Trinitarian communion. All those who share in it form the Body of Christ which ensures a secondary communion arising from the Trinitarian communion: the 'ecclesia'.

Through baptism of Word and Deed one enters this two-fold communion. Fostering this life of baptism we call spirituality in the Christian sense.⁸ In this life there are two

4. Editions from Athirampuzha, Mannanam and Thevara. We make use of the Thevara edition, 'Varthamanappusthakam, Paremmakkal Thomman Kathanar,' (ed. Thomas Moothedan), Thevara 1977 (= PVM). None of these is a critical edition. The Oriental Institute Vadavathoor published it in 1988.
5. The Varthamanappusthakam, Cathanar Thomman Paremmakkal, trans & ed. Placid J. Podipara (OCA 190), Roma 1971 (=PVP).
6. "St. Thomas Christians" is an inaccurate rendering which can not substitute 'Mar Thoma Nazrani's' because of historical reasons. By usage "Mar Thoma Nazrani's" should substitute. "St. Thomas Christians". It seems that no Church historian has noticed the fact that our forefathers called themselves "Nazrani's" which is a little different from Christians!
7. Hans Urs Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, vol II: Studies in Theological style: Clerical style, Edinburgh 1969, p. 15.
8. Cf. K. T. Ware, "The Sacrament of Baptism and the Ascetic Life in the Teaching of Mark the Monk," *studia patristica* vol X, 1 (ed. F. L. Cross), Berlin 1970, pp. 441-452; J. Vellian, "Liturgical Spirituality," *Ecclesial Identity of the Thomas Christians* (ed. T. Vellilamthadam et al.), Kottayam 1985, pp. 179-190; J. Aertuyl, "The Spiritual Heritage of the Thomas Christians", Bangalore 1982, pp. X-XI; T. Spidlik, "Some Aspects of Syrian Spirituality," *Homage to Mar Kariattil: Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist* (ed. C. Payngot), Rome 1987, pp. 63-71.

essential elements: First and foremost a life of Faith, Hope and Charity—which ‘connects’ us with God and God’s people. Secondly, ‘imitation’ of Christ in all possible ways for the glory of God and for the good of God’s people. Both are complementary; the first is Trinitarian while the second is Christocentric. Both of them invite us to make constant efforts to shape our lives according to the will of God expressed in Scripture – the incarnate Word of God for us today here and now; but such an invitation is ‘effective’ with human co-operation; that is to say, this ‘shaping’ is possible and effected only through the ‘participation’ in and through the incarnate Deed which we have in Sacraments. Thus we see that the Church is a mother who nurtures her children with this Word and His Deed. It goes without saying that christian life is that of communion – Trinitarian and human; and Christian spirituality is scriptural and liturgical at the same time. All private devotions are just secondary in Christian life; no baptized person is a ‘private’ and unrelated individual. Life of Christ-Trinitarian communion – is poured into human hearts through Baptism and Eucharist (and sacraments in general). This is a liturgical event in the Church and for the service of the Church. Every member of the Body is nourished by the Mother for the service of the whole Body. Here as we see, the Faith of the member producing Hope, is strengthened by the nourishment of the Church for Charity and ‘imitation’ of Christ. Thus Christian (= spiritual) life is nothing other than the life of Faith, Hope and Charity in ‘imitation’ of Christ arising from baptismal commitment.

What is the Spiritual Vision of Varthamanappusthakam ?

We shall try to answer this question step by step. But an answer to this question is possible if only we consider the many other works of

Mar Paremmakkal. Since we cannot envisage such an extensive and comprehensive study at present, our answer remains incomplete.

1. A Scriptural Spirituality

One who goes through any section of Varthamanappusthakam is caught in a labyrinth of biblical citations, allusions, personalities, events etc. Without a systematic research one cannot identify all these scriptural references. The present writer came across more than 74 such references; but a careful reader may find even more. The most important and interesting feature of these biblical quotations or allusions is that they are all cited from the memory of the author. So we may not be able to identify some references without great effort. Some times the very style of the author becomes one with these citations. We do not feel that these scriptural passages or personalities or incidents are brought in for the sake of some ‘authority’. Instead, the author is feeling one with the scriptural experiences which are mentioned or interpreted; he believes his own experiences understandable only in the light of the scriptures. We can at times observe a profound theological and spiritual usage of the scripture. In interpreting the personal – Christian life here and now Bible gives the author a golden criterion. The lives of Paremmakkal and Kariattil are put into the Scriptural background to interpret every thing in its light. All the odd and dangerous situations, along with failures and misery do not ruin them since they are able to see all these in the light of Scripture itself. Scripture gives them consolation and hope. Their faith does not fall apart in spite of constant misery, privations and failures. In the midst of unimaginable sufferings and agony they look into Scripture to see how in similar situations Jesus, the apostles, the prophets, the psalmist, Moses, Elijah,

David or other scriptural personalities behaved. As a result when difficulties and failures increased, their faith grew strong and their hope never ceased. It is such a personal and firm spiritual consolation felt deep within, that is expressed when Paremmakkal writes:

Difficulties are a sign that God is with us ... (many examples from Scriptures pointed out). So when we endeavour to procure something pleasing to God we shall have to encounter difficulties. The end will be successful".⁹

It is not only when faced with some difficulties or problems they turned to Bible for an explanation. The Divine Word remains their whole standard of reference for every action. When they saw others violating divine laws and human laws alike a passion for God's people kindled in them a lamp. So we read; "If they could act against the law of God to gain something for themselves or for their people; why should any of us hesitate to act in accordance with the Gospel and with the tradition of holy Church to produce the glory of God and the good of our community?"¹⁰

God's will expressed in Scriptures led them in their difficult journey on earth. When everything was lost they did not lose hope. When their attempts failed through the efforts of enemies they prayed: 'Let God's will be done in the case of our Churches!'¹¹ In all difficulties they could find a clear light in and through the Word of God. Without losing the sense of humour in their failures they could identify their situations with those found in the Scriptures and this they did without any presumption or despair. Thus, they

evaluate their failure in Rome: "All of them were duly convinced of the truth of the matter. But it happened as in the case of David and Goliath of old, (-Saul ought to have praised David for killing Goliath, but instead envy took root in Saul's heart and he began to fear David-). In the like manner they feared that their rule over Malabar might come to an end if the confusion in Malabar ended, even though they could not argue against the truth of their convictions driven home by our long and tedious journey and our manifold arguments ..."¹²

Every action of a Christian is weighed in the balance of Scripture. Some times it is the criteria of the ecclesial traditions, teachings or behaviour of the good fore-fathers who handed down the 'Law of Thomas'. Thus both Scripture and tradition gave them a common criteria for Christian life. We read about Kariattil who, 'disobeyed' his bishop's instructions by showing respect to Mar Thoma VI in order to follow a better Christian path: "Do you think O readers that the bishop gave the instruction mentioned above (ie, not to show any respect to Mar Thoma VI) to Malpan 'Kariattil' out of zeal for the glory of our Religion? If anyone thinks like this let him hear the gospel lesson. Christ our Lord says in the gospel 'Learn from me who are meek and humble of heart'. As said in the book of the Acts, St. Paul called the bishops of Ephesus whom he had ordained, and said to them: 'From the day I entered Asia, you know that I have been among you in humility and in much sorrow, and how I announced to you the word of God'.

9. PVP, p. 50; cf. Ibid; pp. 97-98, 104, 107, 126-127, 130-131, 153, 162, 167-168, 205-207, 233 etc.

10. PVP, p. 282.

11. PVM, p. 165.

12. PVP, p. 155; PVM, p. 195.

Again St. Paul says in another place: 'We must show ourselves as ministers of God with great patience, suffering and labour.' Hence those who know a little of the gospel know also that humility, patience and prudence are the qualities of those who go to announce the word of God so that seeing their good works others may praise God the Father who is in heaven..."¹³

The author of Varthamanappusthakam is well versed in Scriptures—both OT and NT—and he is able to allude or cite and interpret different biblical incidents with a natural and special talent. His special talent lies in selecting the most apt citation or allusion and in his ability to apply the same to the present life situation. Thus we see Scripture leading them both, then and there consoling them, encouraging and strengthening their broken heartedness, instilling hope in their hearts, building up their faith in God's providence, helping them to shape their lives according to christian principles of love of God and love of God's people. All their failures do not stop them; they go on and on until they can say: "We thus cleared ourselves of the responsibility we had before God."¹⁴

A biblical spirituality is clear from the odd 74 biblical passages and allusions we come across in Varthamanappusthakam.¹⁵ The author has no difficulty in finding an exit through the light of Scriptural incidents and models. Only one whose life was

nourished by the living fountains of Scripture can so naturally and so easily turn to God's Word. A search into Scripture in every life situation is very intuitive and characteristic for our author. Life is explained as in the salvation history found in Scriptures. There is no repetition of scriptural history; nor there is any over simplification of the deep mysterious Word of God. But salvation history continues through our own lives. Our failures and miseries are not the first nor last ones. In scripture we can find many models that encourage us, lead us in spite of our failures. We are all part and parcel of a salvation history that has not yet been consummated. Our role is ours and we play it with God's help; and we have a light in Scriptures: those models who went ahead of us have set us an example. It is here one may understand why Paremmakkal refers not only to Scriptures but also to 'fore-fathers', 'Law of Thomas', 'traditions of our holy Church' etc. The same salvation story narrated in scriptures should reflect in our history, in our lives, in our Church and in our time and place. It is not a closed history; it continues through us either for our salvation or for our damnation depending upon our co-operation or lack of it. Our christian lives are just continuation of Christ's life. Our sufferings too an extension of His sufferings provided we undergo them with the intention of God's glory and the good of God's people. "A small affliction borne for God's sake is better

13. PVP, p. 59; cf. Ibid, p. 60-61= "But I say this attitude (of the missionaries, etc) is a great sin and folly and is also against our faith and the holy Gospel."

14. Ibid., p. 158.

15. In the present article we do not take all these passages from Scripture. If some of the readers can point out more references the present writer would be very grateful. One of the drawbacks of the excellent PVP is that it does not give attention to these frequent biblical references, in its index. None of the Malayalam editions care to give an index at all. Varthamanappusthakam and its author's different works along with those of Kariattil await scholars' attention.

(before God) than a great work performed without tribulation, because affliction willingly borne brings to light the proof of love."¹⁶ If we participate in His salvific sufferings and follow His Word in our daily lives, our sufferings and following of Christ become more meaningful and useful for ourselves and others. Scripture is the light of our steps; so even when we fail there is no reason to stop our efforts 'for the glory of God and the good of our community'.¹⁷

2. *A Spirituality of Faith, Hope and Charity.*

A Scriptural spirituality is essentially a life of faith, hope and charity. Faith and hope in the lives of Paremmakkal and Kariattil prompted them to undertake all possible efforts to unite their church, to liberate their community from slavery and oppression. Their charity finds expression on many occasions if it is the case of charity towards other human beings as individuals.¹⁸ But such acts of charity we leave to the reader to count and evaluate. We turn our attention to another kind of charity which is extraordinary and rare in history. It is this charity which made Paremmakkal a prophet of ecclesial identity and ecclesial unity; it is this charity which made Kariattil a martyr for this unity and 'good of the community'; it is this charity which added to the name of Paremmakkal, the qualification, 'the Great'.¹⁹

Charity towards individuals is one thing, and charity towards an oppressed, downtrodden and disintegrated community as a whole is quite another. The former is noble, but the latter nobler while it involves all the individuals as a single body with its past, present and future. Individuals die and disappear while 'ecclesia' and community live longer. Charity of Moses was rewarded with personal loss, bitterness and agony. The man who led out his people of Pharaoh's yoke could not enter the Promised Land because of the sins also of the community for which he became a vicarious victim and representative. The vicarious role of Christ saves mankind. Also every Christian is invited to take upon himself this vicarious and charitable role for the community. The ordinary sufferings of the individual become vicarious and hence salvific when he undertakes them because of his charity towards the 'ecclesia'. Here 'One' stands and suffers for 'many'; and 'many' derive the fruits of 'One's' charity.

It was no personal or vested interest that led Paremmakkal and Kariattil. They saw the misery, disunity down-troddenness of their Church; they saw the disintegration of their apostolic 'ecclesia'; they saw the oppression of their community in its utter helplessness; they saw that missionaries identified evangelization with colonialization and this wrong attitude of the missionaries burnt them with zeal 'for God's glory and for the

16. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (trans), The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian, Boston-& Massachusetts 1984, p. 161; cf. Rom 8, 17.

17. VVP, pp. 138, 282 etc. A much repeated phrase.

18. Ibid. pp. 86, 88, 287-288, 291 etc. This charity is extended even to enemies; p. 87 etc.

19. cf. T. Velliamthadam & J. Kurianal (ed), The Freedom Fighters of Thomas Christians, Kottayam 1986, pp. 18-41; cf. C. payngot (ed), Homage to Mar Kariattil: pioneer Malabar Ecumenist, Rome 1987, pp. 11-14, 15-26, 27-50, 63-71.

good of the community'. So, when their 'ecclesia' looked for a way out from the 'Egyptian' situation—slavery, misery, loss of identity, loss of faith, lack of hope, disintegration of God's people—both Paremmakkal and Kariattil did not hesitate to lead their community and suffer willingly for the 'ecclesia' of God. All they got in return for their self-sacrificing and kenotic charity was added physical sufferings, mental anguish, constant misunderstandings, and above all a consuming zeal for God and God's people. Charity towards God's 'ecclesia' urged them to undergo any privations, physical suffering and agony. Had it been for any personal gain both of them would not have done so,²⁰ the early pages of Varthamanappusthakam describe in detail the great disunity and disharmony that ruled Mar Thoma Nazranis because of the missionaries. Every individual knew that something had to be done for the good of the community. But very few wanted to see it done without expecting any personal benefits. Vested interests led even those so called pious and learned ones.²¹ When we place the efforts of Paremmakkal and Kariattil against this dark background their lives tell a brighter story.

Word of God fostered the faith and hope of Paremmakkal and his friend. Life with God for them meant life for the people of God. Good of the 'ecclesia' is the 'glory of God' and this forms the basis of Paremmakkal's spirituality. Commitment to Jesus means commitment to Christ's Body which is the Church. Where is the 'Spirit' and 'spirituality' here?

Well, it is there where God and Christ is; it is there where Christ's 'ecclesia' is. Communion in the Trinity finds its expression in 'ecclesia'; this communion—Trinitarian and ecclesial—is also in the spiritual life of a Christian who lives by faith, hope and charity. It is here we find the great theological depth and personal commitment in the spiritual vision of the author of Varthamanappusthakam. They became 'restless' seeing the spiritual slavery of God's people. Disunity in the Body of Christ consumed them with zeal. Like frantic parents who try to save their beloved children from fire they ran hither and thither without the least concern for personal health or advantage. Only in the historical life situation of Mar Thoma Nazrani community of the mid eighteenth century we can interpret and understand the heroic charity of these two holy and great sons of India: "These two great sons of the Indian Church could feel and share the pulse and aspirations of the mother Church."²² They could fully commit their lives to the cause of their community without counting the costs, without expecting any human rewards. Any ordinary one would have broken down in the circumstances which encountered these two heroic lovers of the Church.

Rooted firm in faith they dug deep to lay the foundations of the 'ecclesia' of Mar Thoma Nazranis as it exists today. When foundations were shattered to pieces they stood on firm ground to support the falling columns of Mar Thoma Nazrani community. They were alone in their attempt, but always supported by the constant prayer of their 'ecclesia'. Through

20. PVP, pp. 69, 76, 126, 130, 162, 165–166, 282, etc.

21. cf. Ibid. pp. 32–66.

22. D. Simon Cardinal Lourdasamy, "Kariattil and Paremmakkal: Two heroic Lovers of the Church", *Homage to Kariattil: Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist* (ed. c. payngot), Rome 1987, p. 12.

heart-breaking experiences of utter failures in their attempts, they swam for the shore which they never reached. Their ship remained always in the midst of storms and cruel waves. Still they did not suffer the shipwreck of faith. Their faith led them through and through the dark night of their spiritual pilgrimage. Utter darkness and emptiness did not conquer their hope. Like blind men in a dark alley they searched for a ray of light. It is this inner spiritual experience of hope 'ad absurdum' which increased their love for God and God's people. Despair did not overcome their hearts because of the inner light of faith and hope in the "special help of God".²³ It was this unfailing hope which led them on their march through the blind alley. So we read about a whole spiritual programme in their lives whenever they faired, by which they were able to go on, "committing everything to God."²⁴ Such a total commitment to God's will was never wanting in their journey to God's shore of love, joy and peace. Consequently an inner joy and peace ruled over their hearts even in the darkest moments of their spiritual pilgrimage. There is only a single answer to this: "Faith is the eye of the soul, hope is her vision, and love its living, noetic light. The soul can not be filled with joy and secret consolation except by the operation of grace."²⁵

Their commitment to God's will was not a passing or temporary phenomenon. There are numerous examples

to prove that it was their constant spiritual programme which worked 'miracles,' moved mountains, and shattered the plans of enemies: "But he trusted God would save them from all these."²⁶ Through all their experiences they learned the most important lesson as we read again, "But God was pleased to make us understand that those who call upon His name will not be in want of anything."²⁷ Even in their personal prayers they asked nothing for themselves; a complete self-emptying love for the good of their community helped them to build up their hope in "God without whose permission no one can do anything (and who) was kind towards us".²⁸

We cannot tangibly count today all the fruits of their faith, hope, love, efforts and toils for the good of the 'ecclesia' of Mar Thoma Nazarianis. For this it is we ourselves who deserve the blame. If we do not share in their spirit, faith, hope and love for God God's people who are responsible if not we ourselves? If we can not share in their selfless charity towards the community it may be that we do not love God as they loved. Love of God is love of God's people and vice versa. We can not love the church in abstract. All of us are born members of a concrete 'ecclesia' which is an existential expression of Christ's Body. If only we love the feet we can love the hands because both feet and hands belong to the same body. Today many of us have the illusion that we need not care for a smaller member since we falsely

23. PVP, pp. 29, 33, 66, 86, etc. This is one of the most repeated phrases in Varthamanappusthakam. If we avoid a few literary jargons of the author it becomes the most frequent phrase. No other phrase explains so clearly and so often, the 'hope against hope' or hope 'ad absurdum,' as this one.

24. PVP., p. 77.

25. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (trans), op. cit, p. 425.

26. PVP., p. 80.

27. Ibid., p. 73.

28. Ibid., p. 69.

hold that it is enough to love the body. But where is this body without this or that concrete member whose love is not exclusive but inclusive? This great ecclesiological principle was well-understood by our forefathers like Paremmakkal and Kariattil. That is why their faith and hope enabled them to love God's people in a concrete period of history and in a concrete place. We can not love humanity in the abstract if we do not care showing that love to concrete human beings—this one or that one whom we meet everyday. Paremmakkal and Kariattil could imbibe the faith of their community; they themselves grew in that faith and this growth was the result of a spiritual pilgrimage in hope and love.

3. Christian Life led by the Light of Constant prayer

We saw that spiritual life begins with baptism and that this baptismal commitment grows through faith, hope and love nurtured by scripture and sacraments. Nourishment of Christian life is in the Church and by the Church which has God's word (Scripture) and God's Deed (Sacraments, especially Eucharist). We saw how the lives of Paremmakkal and Kariattil witness to this basic understanding of Christian spirituality. One of the most important expression of this witness we see in their constant prayer life.²⁹ This feature was an ever present reality in their 'pilgrimage' for God's people.

The historical situation of their Church was a wilderness; in that

desert everyone panted for a drop of unity, ecclesial identity, freedom and the lost glory of their 'ecclesia'. Thus our two great sons set out as representatives for the whole people. The whole community went in and through these two persons on an unending pilgrimage. When the two prayed the whole 'ecclesia' prayed in them; when the two suffered the people of God suffered in them. They two thus became vicarious victims for an unending spiritual pilgrimage. All their experiences and failures were just those of their community and not theirs as such. In to the sea they set out. The sea was full of salty water and they saw that such a water was not what their people needed in the desert. So they went far and wide to find fresh water. Through cyclones, storms and waves they sailed. Finally they got the fresh water much expected by their people. But only a broken down Paremmakkal lived to see that the water they brought was stolen by the enemies on the way. In the dark night of their pilgrimage the sole consolation was their never fading light of constant and intense prayer experience. Our two pilgrim fathers started in faith, were led by hope and lived an exemplary life of ecclesial charity. The constant prayer which showed their path in the dark days of that long and holy pilgrimage of faith, was always a method of spiritual life that worked marvelous. We read about this often:

"Above all we thanked God again for what He had done for us according to the words of the Gospel: 'Ask

29. Without a repeated perusal of Varthamanappusthakam this does not become clear. We see in it two praying men. We immediately notice that they are not praying for themselves, but for the 'good of their community.' Hundreds of such incidents is the clear proof for this constant spiritual warfare in 'darkness,' 'desert' and 'sea'. In darkness no one can see; in desert one pants for cool air and water, which he can not attain; in sea there is plenty of water, but he can not drink!

and you will receive; seek and you will find'.³⁰

The most important and frequent activity during those eight years of their journey was prayer and prayer alone. All other undertakings were just secondary to prayer. Before and after every step of their continuous endeavours for the Church, we see them praying, praising and thanking God. They wanted to 'procure something pleasing to God' and so they foresaw the difficulties. But their intense prayer life deep within their hearts reminded them constantly: The end will be successful. St. Paul says: "We are in difficulties but we are not defeated".³¹ Prayer instilled in them a strong personal trust in God and it is this profound trust in a God who is near and listening which made them walk in faith to the very end of their lives.

Another aspect of their prayer experience is that it enabled them to

see the hand of God in ordinary daily events. For a man of faith God is everywhere around him in order to guide him. God moves everyone and everything they encounter, of course in their favour since they are seeking the glory of God and the good of God's people. Sometimes their humility, obedience and zealous prayer work together to bring about the experience of the abundant loving care of a providing and helping hand of God. But other times, it just happens in their favour in a strange and mysterious manner which they immediately attribute to God's special care and concern for His humble and deprived servants whose only hope and resort is God alone.³²

4. *A Liturgical Spirituality*

At Bahaia the Archbishop of the place was very kind to our pilgrim fathers. The good Archbishop advised them to change their Syriac rite (for

30. PVP, p. 86

31. Ibid., p. 50. Only one whose life was led by the constant meditation on Scripture could pray and write like this when there was, humanly speaking, no exit. Darkness became light because of intense prayer life. Word of God led them to prayer which in turn inspired them to seek consolation in Scripture. Moreover, the Scripture instructed them to pray all the more with hope and trust in God. That is why they are always full of hope in the midst of unimaginable difficulties. Cf. PVP, pp. 50-51; p. 70 = "But it is said in the psalm 'Do not be afraid of the terror of the night, nor of the word that goes about in the darkness, nor of the wind that blows a mid-day.' We believed that God has revealed this lest we should be afraid of what the enemies of truth and justice murmur stealthily and in secret." Thus their spiritual pilgrimage through the dark alley was always guided by the inner light of Scripture and prayer. The light deep within their hearts strengthened their hope and hence we read again: "But God was pleased to make us understand that those who call upon His name will not be in want of anything" (PVP, p. 73).

32. cf. PVP, pp. 66, 72, 75, 77-78, 86, 88, 96 etc. There are many incidents which they considered to be 'miraculous' because of God's hand moving everything and everyone in their favour. Sometimes it is some physical cure or an event in nature; it is, at other times their enemies turning into their favour or the failure of the plans of these enemies. Varthamanappusthakam gives many examples of these three type of 'miracles' and here we cannot deal with them in detail.

the time being) so that they may be more acceptable and welcome in Europe. He offered to teach them Latin rite in detail. But inspite of his friendly counsel and compulsion they rejected that offer with thanks: "We thanked him for his love and for the favour he was doing us; but we said that it was not proper for us to change our rite in which we were born and which was in use in our country."³³ This incident is just a single example which shows how deep rooted theological, spiritual, liturgical and ecclesiological concepts and convictions they held. This is not an isolated event in which they expressed their inner convictions in liturgical and ecclesiological matters. As a result wherever they went they could live as sons of Mar Thoma Nazranis celebrating the Holy Qurbana in East Syrian rite and thus witness to their own spiritual, liturgical and ecclesial heritage.

We cannot understand in depth the commitment of Paremmakkal³⁴ as regards oriental and liturgical spiritual heritage, unless we make a reference to our own times. About contemporary attitudes among Mar Thoma Nazranis the late Malpan Placid J. Podipara writes: "The clergy, not excluding the prelates, with a few exceptions, are Latin in mind and outlook, and in general they cannot see anything except through the Latin glass which they are reluctant to put away. It

goes without saying that this strikes at the very root of an Oriental Church which the Syro-Malabar Church ought to be if it should remain faithful to its past."³⁵ Only one who lived the liturgical spirituality of the Church could act and write like Paremmakkal. For him spirituality was liturgical in every sense. Daily prayers and celebration of Qurbana were closely connected according to his view. It was by this way he ascended the spiritual ladder. Moreover, his faith was strengthened by the meditation on the Scriptures. Importance of Scriptural meditation in the spiritual and prayer life of a Christian is well understood by Oriental Christian writers.³⁶ For Orientals spirituality is not a private matter. The Trinitarian and ecclesial dimension is always there and this communitarian aspect is well nourished only through the liturgy of the Church. It is not without reason that Orientals speak of Holy Qurbana as the Liturgy which makes the growth of the Church (there by, of every individual member too) an actuality. Unfortunately the Western Christians sum to have lost the relevance and uniqueness of the liturgical spirituality of their Church long ago.

Both Paremmakkal and Kariatti were sons of their Church and they lived the liturgical spirituality of Mar Thoma Nazranis. They could imbibe the spiritual heritage of their Mother

34. We mention him specially because as regards ecclesiological and liturgical matters he seems to have led Kariattil. Kariattil's formation was not oriental. His convictions in this matter depended only on how far he could cherish the Mar Thoma Nazrani spiritual and liturgical heritage which he might have received in his boyhood, and what he learnt after his return to India as Malpan. But Paremmakkal remained a convinced orientalist whose influence on Kariattil is clear from various incidents in Varthamanappusthakam.

35. Placid J. Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, Kottayam 1979, p. 41. How the anti-oriental technique of the then missionaries is continued by today's Latin Church in India is described by this ecclesiologist. cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 42ff; 51, etc.

36. cf. *Holy Transfiguration Monastery* (trans), op. cit., pp. 5, 11, 27-28, etc.

Church through the liturgy. Fasting, abstinence, penance, various ascetic practices and constant prayer led them to the authentic spiritual life and mysticism of Mar Thoma Nazranis.³⁷ As the foundation of their mysticism we find their liturgical spirituality. But one may also note a few peripheral influence which crept through priestly formation under the Latin missionaries.³⁸

5. *A Spirituality of Vicarious Suffering*

The vicarious character of Christ's existence and His suffering cannot be overlooked by a christian in his own personal life. Be a Christian means be a partaker in Christ's vicarious suffering and kenotic existence. Christ's role is shared with all who become a Christian. This role no one can escape without ceasing to be a partaker in Christ's life here and here after. It is this Christ-likeness which demands a vicarious existence from ordinary Christian life. Communion with God and God's people-Trinitarian and ecclesial communion-calls for this vicariousness of Christian life. We are Christians as individuals but into a community. Christ is in all; so too, we are to be oriented to others because the same Christ is in us all. Whether we realize and live up to this great radical principle of our religion is another question.

But we can see this principle realized in the lives of Paremmakkal and Kariattil. They could sacrifice their whole human existence for the glory of God which is the good of God's people. They wanted to see God's glory resulting from the re-union, re-integration and spiritual liberation of their Mother Church. Not only in sufferings and misery but also in prayers and spiritual consolations they became vicarious victims for the good of Mar Thoma Nazranis.

Christ, the Son is in every Christian and so we are all sons of the Father of all. Spirit being the Life-giver, we all have life in Him. This communion with God and God's people is the most radical element in Christianity. All children of Adam are to live according to this spiritual and mystical communion which is invisible. But the same invisible communion is made visible in the Church. 'One' is in 'Many'; 'Many' are in 'One'—Mar Aphrahat would write³⁹. For all early Christian communities this vicarious and baptismal communion meant 'spiritual warfare' and ascetism. But in the fourth century 'monasticism' made a 'specialization' and 'privatization' of baptismal commitment because of the increasingly lapsed christian life among the ordinary people. But among the Orientals the early ideals remained for long and

37. cf. J. Aerthayil, op. cit., pp. 156-174, 193-201, 221-225.

38. We see some Latin influences on the prayer life of Paremmakkal and Kariattil. But the main source of their spiritual vision is doubtless the oriental Christian mysticism and liturgical spirituality of Mar Thoma Nazranis. Latin devotions, novenas, rosary and the like practices are rather secondary. But today Mar Thoma Nazranis have a confused mixture of both. cf. V. Pathikulangara, "An Individual Church and its Liturgy," *The Church I Love* (ed. J. Madey & G. Kaniarakath), Kottayam 1983 p. 5.

39. Aphrahat, Dem. VII (ed. J. Parisot, *Patrologia Syriaca* I, Paris); Cf (unpublished dissertation of the present writer), *Bnay Qyama* studies and the *Demonstration VII* of Mar Aphrahat the Persian Sage, *Institutum patristicum Augustinianum*, Rome 1986.

still remain to a great extent⁴⁰. Primitive simplicity of christian life coupled with ascetic practices are still visible among the Mar Thoma Nazranis. The spirituality of vicarious suffering as well as prayer reflected in Varthamanappusthakam is just an example of the spiritual heritage of Mar Thoma Nazranis. Our forefathers did not develop an intellectual gymnastics on christian faith. If we examine the christianity of Mar Aphrahat (in the non-Roman empire) we see the same. When it comes to Mar Aphrem the understanding of christian truths remain more or less same. But after the time of Mar Aphrem the Syriac Christianity too, because of the influence of Greek Christianity developed a 'theology' in the line of Greek and Latin Christianity. But the orientals in general did not lose the dimension of faith to give undue importance to reason. Fortunately Mar Thoma Nazranis could hand down the christian heritage without the 'rationalization' of faith. Many such rudimentary and primitive concepts of authentic christian life are evident in Varthamanappusthakam. An idea of the Church which once again underlines the vicariousness of Christian life as presented by Paremmakkal is very important: we all form a 'family'. This basic ecclesial and Christian principle is a much repeated one in his book⁴¹.

Church is the 'family' of God's people. This concept urged Paremmakkal and Kariattil to fulfill their vicarious role in this family. Sufferings

of a family member is felt deeply by other members. Gains of one is shared by all others. All grow together as a unit; all stand together as a single entity. Stature of God the Father as reflected in Christ the Son is the model for 'imitation'. 'Imitation of Christ' in His vicariousness was important in the spiritual growth of Mar Paremmakkal and Kariattil. There is a constant invitation to all members to share the burden of all members. This invitation was fully realized in the lives of these two Nazranis. They suffered for their Mother Church; they carried the burden of fellow members; they joyfully underwent the experience of being the co-workers of Christ in His vicariousness. Constant prayer for the community, self-sacrifices, physical sufferings, numerous privations, fear caused by enemies, utter helplessness in strange lands, many diseases and mortal dangers did not defeat them. On the other hand these increased in their hearts a burning love and zeal for God's glory and good of God's people. Zeal for Christian unity, inner experience of 'darkness,' 'desert' and 'sea', wandering in loneliness, like prophets of O T, meeting death face to face—these all made them share in the vicarious role of Christ. Very often they experienced God—forsakenness and utter dead end. But a mysterious bright light in the depth of soul was not wanting to them. Like the psalmist they wept in the loneliness of the heart; like prophets they wandered in the wilderness as great fighters for the cause of God

40. Among Mar Thoma Nazranis even today one can notice the primitive christian ascetical spirituality and quasi monastic practices of early Christians. eg: Vegetarian life, intense fasting and frequent abstinence, gift of tears, special non-monastic pious vows, hospitality and generosity towards strangers and travellers, retirement from active worldly life during old age, etc. (This last mentioned need not necessarily be the influence of Hindu 'Vanaprastha' though we can not rule out such a possibility.)

41. Cf. PVP, pp. 29-35, 49, 146, etc.

and God's people; like apostles and martyrs they served God and His people joyfully undergoing all sufferings and privations for the good of others.

Sources of their Spiritual Vitality

Before we end this short study it is relevant to mention the important sources from which Paremmakkal and Kariattil derived their spiritual vitality. As mentioned above, first and foremost it is the Scripture and Liturgy of their Mother Church. As a result their spirituality was christo-centric. But we notice also their devotions to saints. Here we see a special Marian dimension⁴² in their devotions; then comes their extraordinary attachment to St. Thomas the Apostle.⁴³ Occasionally we see them praying to many other saints. But always their prayers were for their community and for the cause of their Church.

We cannot ignore the patristic influence on the spiritual vision of Varthamanappusthakam. A few times Paremmakkal cites St. Augustine.⁴⁴ But it is doubtful whether he knew much about the works of St. Augustine except what he got from his personal study and priestly studies under missionaries. Now comes the question of authentic Syriac Christian influence through the ascetical works of Mar Aphrem.⁴⁵ He knew the great Syrian Father through liturgy and study. What other patristic sources influenced his spiritual vision is not easy to decide.⁴⁶ Paremmakkal gives a rather interesting reference to the Life of St. Antony.⁴⁷

Finally, the 'Law of Thomas' was the source from which Paremmakkal and Kariattil partook in the common spiritual heritage of Mar Thoma Nazranis.⁴⁸ Their baptismal commitment to Christ and Christ's body was always nourished by the Law of Thomas as well as by the good

42. Ibid., pp. 84-85, 206, etc.

43. Ibid., pp. 29, 109, 111, etc.

44. Ibid., pp. 79, 168, etc; PVM, p. 85, 134, etc.

45. cf. PVP, pp. 169-172; cf. J. Aertthayil, op. cit., pp. 156, 171.

46. cf. J.B. Chabot, 'L'autodafe' des livres syriaques au Malabar, 'Florilegium Melchior de Vogue', Paris 1909, pp. 613-623. The spiritual influence of the eastern Fathers on the 'Law of Thomas' is clear from the list of books burnt by missionaries.

47. Cf. PVP, p. 80 = St. Antony sees Devil casting a net to catch human beings. This 'citation' is not from the Greek or Latin versions. Cf. René Draguet, *La Vie Primitive de S. Antoine conservée en Syriac* (CSCO 417, Syr. 183), Louvain 1980, pp. 13-16, 23-26, 28-33, 83-87, 105-107, 117-118, 136-137, etc. cf. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of Paradise* vol. II, London 1904, pp. 937-939; cf. ibid., pp. 42-44, 46-51. In pp. 937-939 we see the allusion of Paremmakkal attributed to Life of St. Antony. If Paremmakkal had access to some old Syriac version of the Life of St. Antony it may even support the theory of Draguet that Athanasius can not be the author of the original Life of St. Antony. T.D. Barnes, "Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate? The problem of the Life of Antony", *JTS* new series 37 (1986) pp. 353-368. A. Louth, "St. Athanasius and the Greek 'Life of Antony'", *JTS* new series 39 (1988) pp. 504-509.

48. cf. PVP, p. 61, 96, 282, etc.

Spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church?!

The above title is the name of a booklet (by George Nedungatt S.J., STAR Documentation 13, Alwaye 1989) in which the author tries to present a study on the spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church in India with some commendable insights and pieces of information. However, the booklet as a whole defeats its very purpose because of the shallow conjectures, authoritarian statements and baseless remarks on several responsible individuals in the Church. The author starts with and intention of defending at any cost some recent pet hypotheses, which are not becoming a researcher. In his comments and criticism there emerges often a medieval or modern western writer who is stranger to authentic Eastern Christian Spirituality.

The author claims to have referred to all the first eight volumes of *Christian Orient on Spirituality*; but does not show any sign of familiarity with the *Editorials* such as, *Monasticism*, *Chr Or* 3/3 (1982) 101-103, "*Indian Spirituality*"? ID 5/3 (1984) 99-104, *The Task of Oriental Theology in the Indian Context* ID 6/3 (1985) 97-104, *Thomas Christian Culture* ID 7/3 (1986) 105-110, *Mar Thoma Margam and Evangelization*

ID 8/3 (1987) 103-109, which practically cover the subject matter he discusses in the current booklet. This appears to be a wilful evasion, which again must not be the approach of a sincere researcher. Still, he does not forget to qualify himself a "pioneer" (p.3) in this field!

By dividing the pre-sixteenth century history of the Thomas Christians of India between an initial *Indian Period* and a secondary *Chaldean Period* (p.4) the real "cat" jumps out. It is a "cat" begotten in the 60's, as far as I know from reliable sources, in the salubrious climate of Rome, by a few Indian jesuits who were fanatic promoters of the so-called "Indianization". Their primary aim was to win over at least a few intellectuals and bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church who were also beginning to emit by this time such vibrations together with a kind of Chaldean allergy.

"Chaldean liturgy, imported from Persia or mesopotamia, was imposed on the original Indian Church of the Thomas Christians in the fourth century, exactly as that of the Latin imposition in the sixteenth century. Hence there must also be a dechaldea-

forefathers who lived according to this Law. So their unending pilgrimage and wandering on behalf of all Mar Thoma Nazranis become all the more

relevant for all who have inherited the Law of Thomas - because, their life "is a glorious victory for our holy and orthodox faith".⁴⁹

Kathanar Thomas Koonammakkel

49. Ibid., p. 145.

nization together with a delatinization in order to reach a true Indian Church" propositions are very attractive to ordinary ears! It was, in fact, a torpedo against the identity of the Syro-Malabar Church, which was being strengthened and united from within through the restoration of her own liturgical heritage (1962) and establishment of her own priestly formation centre (St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam) and mission fields (Chanda mission). The Utopian "Indian Church" of the protagonists was not anything beyond an eclecticism of modern Latin and Western fads, Hindu rituals and practices, and a few elements of Thomas Christian heritage. They got more than enough intellectuals and prelates of the Syro-Malabar Church to play the second fiddle.

Fr. Nedungatt S. J. must naturally defend his Indian Jesuit friends! Still, it is good that he went through the famous book of Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, just to have a wider vision of the beautiful cultural and religious symbiosis between India, Persia, Mesopotamia, and so on.

Fr. Nedungatt speaks about the role of liturgy in Christian Spirituality, but not about its *unique role* in Eastern Christian heritages. It is quite natural, I believe, as he got no opportunity to live and experience his own ecclesial and liturgical Spirituality. Immediately after his secondary school days, he was adopted by the Jesuit Order and then he grew up exclusively in the Latin, Western and Jesuit climate. He still continues in the same set up. In fact, he is an orphan to the Syro-Malabar Spirituality. Still it is true that at times he comes out of that self-willed isolation and expresses his appreciation of certain aspects of his mother Church. Anyhow, we cannot but wonder at his audacity in accusing Rev. Dr.

Placid J. Podipara CMI of lacking in pastoral experience (in another article, in *Vidyajyoti*: cfr also the reaction to it by Bishop Mar. A. D. Mattam of Satna in the August 1989 issue of the same review. The same article appeared also in *Vachanadhara* and a reply to that by Fr. Lonappan Arangassery was given in the June 1989 issue of *Christian Orient*).

Fr. Nedungatt shows his familiarity with Greek and Sanskrit languages—something praiseworthy. But he hasn't used any Syriac term in this booklet. Is it not too much to claim to have launched "pioneer" work of spirituality of the Syro-Malabar Church without learning the ABCD of its source language?

It is true that we lack evidences for *typical Bema* in the Syro-Malabar churches. But the "long-jump" Fr. Nedungatt proposes out of that (p.20) will really be dangerous!

He often searches for *books on spirituality* in the Syro-Malabar Church. If he were a *true Indian* and *Oriental* he ought not have done that; instead, he ought to have turned his attention to the liturgical and traditional sources.

Fr. Nedungatt's enthusiasm to find out at least something of the so-called *Indian Liturgy* in a casual reference to a legendary figure Theophilus the Indian is, indeed, fantastic, but not befitting a scholar and researcher!

Fr. Nedungatt's pessimism on liturgical apostolate (p.38) is due to his pastoral *ignorance* and it is half-truth. There are eparchies in the Syro-Malabar Church where very good liturgical Catechesis is being given; and in those eparchies the authentic liturgical reform is really appreciated.

There is nobody in the present Syro-Malabar Church who denies the need for integrating his or her ecclesial heritage to the given context

whether in India or outside. The real Syro-Malabarians can never allow their Church shrink into a ghetto of the so-called *indianization* or *nationalization*; they must be always alert to make her really *universal*, i.e., make her open to the whole world on one side and on the other, open to the realities of the given situation. It involves both a transcendence and an immanence; the extremes are to be avoided. We believe that is our real ecclesial call today in the Syro-Malabar Church.

Fr. Nedungatt's superficial assertions and over-enthusiastic proclamations can never contribute to an authentic ecclesial Spirituality.

Fr. Nedungatt fails to be consistent very often. He writes: "If the West got so much out of *European monasticism* both culturally and spiritually, it is legitimate to expect a similar contribution from *Indian monasticism*" (p.51). What does he mean by *European and Indian monasticism*? Who is to profit out of what? It is good to remember here that his inconsistency and opportu-

nism was beautifully exposed in a letter to the editor of *Vidyajyoti* (April 1989) by Bishop Mar Paul Chittilappilly of Kalyan, Bombay, in the context of another article he published in that review.

The author appears to give more emphasis to culture than faith (p.52) in the case of Spirituality. As Christian Spirituality is based on liturgy, which is faith-celebration in the context of one's own ecclesial traditions, we fail to understand and justify such an emphasis given to culture over faith.

In short, we are forced to apply to the booklet under consideration and to several articles of Nedungatt S.J. his own harsh criticism (p.58):

Much harm is done to the Syro-Malabar Church and her authentic heritage by sundry guides, who are mostly strangers to this heritage.

George Nedungatt S.J. is the number one of such sundry guides. May God preserve this Church from such "half versed" guides!

Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara CMI

Religions of India and Religio-Cultural Interaction

(Continued from March issue)

A study of the cultural background of the peoples of India, in view of inculturation of the liturgy, has necessarily to pay special attention to their religious beliefs and practices. Culture and religion are inter-related. To some extent religion is part of the culture of a people. One has to be aware of the existence of different religions and religious beliefs in the country. This section is devoted to a brief discussion on the prevalent religions of India. We shall restrict our consideration to certain specific spheres and see how religions interacted and influenced cultures.

Hinduism

The question is raised occasionally whether Hinduism is a religion or only a culture. The answer may depend on what one means by religion and by culture. Fr. Staffner writes: "A genuine synthesis is possible when Hinduism is seen as a culture which has room for many religions, and Christianity is seen as a spiritual power which can become incarnated in any culture".¹ In another place he says: "All the movements which use 'Hindutva'

(Hinduness), as a rallying point, cannot avoid stating what being a Hindu means. All of them agree that being a Hindu does not depend on holding a particular creed or adopting a particular form of worship. They insist that Hinduism is a culture which has room for many religions".²

We have seen earlier that the word 'Hindo' or 'Hindu' is of Persian origin, that it was used to designate the land beyond the river Sindhu and later to indicate the people living in this region. But in recent times, for a century or more, the term Hinduism has been used to signify a particular religion, and those who follow the religion are called Hindus. For the past several decades the Census of India applies the term Hinduism to a specific religion. At present the term 'Hindu' is seldom used in the sense 'Indian'.

It is true that Hinduism as a religion does not teach a definite creed or a definite form of worship. It embraces many beliefs and practices, many sects and sub-sects, often contradicting each other. Theism, Monotheism, Pantheism, or even Atheism

1. Fr. Hans Staffner, S. J., *Jesus Christ and the Hindu Community*, Anand, 1988, p. 81.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

has a place in what is vaguely called Hinduism.

In other religions also we find orthodox and unorthodox sects. There are Christians who do not accept the fundamental teachings of Christianity, who deny the divinity of Christ. Yet they are known as Christians.

What Jawaharlal Nehru writes in his 'Discovery of India' regarding the use of the terms Hindu or Hinduism as applied to Indian Culture deserves attention. He says: "Buddhism and Jainism were certainly not Hinduism or even Vedic Dharma. Yet they arose in India and were integral parts of Indian life, culture, and philosophy. A Buddhist or Jain in India is a hundred percent product of Indian thought and culture, yet neither is a Hindu by faith. It is, therefore, entirely misleading to refer to Indian culture as Hindu culture..."

"It is, therefore, incorrect and undesirable to use 'Hindu' or 'Hinduism' for Indian culture, even with reference to the distant past, although the various aspects of thought, as embodied in ancient writings, were the dominant expression of that culture. Much more is it incorrect to use those terms, in that sense, today".³ Thus according to Nehru, it is "misleading, incorrect and undesirable" to use the term Hindu or Hinduism for Indian culture.

So in the present context it would be a futile mental exercise to make a distinction between Hinduism as a culture and Hinduism as a religion. It would have been alright if Hinduism as a religion was called Vedic Dharma or Brahminism or by some other name. But in current usage Hinduism designates a religion, or even irreligion (of Charvaka sect), and not a culture.

The origin

Vedic religion originated in Central Asia or the Iranian plateau which was the common homeland of the Indo-Aryans and Iranians. Zend Avesta of the ancient Iranians and the Rig-Veda show that some of the gods worshipped were common to both. The Aryan tribes who came to India brought their religion which formed the basis of the Rig-Veda. Powers or manifestations of nature were worshipped as gods. Prithvi (Earth), Agni (Fire), Varuna (Sky), Surya (Sun), Mithra, Indra (god of thunderstorm) etc. were among the many gods.

"The religion of the early Iranians," writes G. F. Moore, "was closely akin to that of the Vedic Indians. One of the greatest of the Iranian gods is Mithra, the Vedic Mithra; other Indo-Iranian gods are Zoroastrian devils, like Indra and Nasatya (Naonhaithya); the myth of the dragon-slayer appears among both people, as do the first man Yama (Iranian Yima), first to die, and ruler in the realm of the dead, and the conception of the order of the world, natural, ritual, moral (Vedic Rita, Avestan, Asha)".⁴

The recent discovery of some documents written on clay tablets at Boghazkoi, the capital of the Hittite Kingdom throw some light on the expansion of the Aryans and their early religion. These tablets discovered in 1907 include records of treaties made between the king of the Hittites and the King of Mitani at the beginning of the 14th century B. C. They mention the names of some gods as their protectors, Mitra, Varuna, Indra and Nasatya gods which we come across in the Rigveda.⁵

3. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Sixth Impr., New Delhi, 1988, p. 75.

4. G. F. Moore, *History of Religions*, 1971 edition, Edinburgh, vol. I, pp. 358-59.

5. Cf. Vidya Dhar Mahajan, *Advanced History of India*, 2nd edit., New Delhi, 1983, p. 47.

Sacrifices had a prominent place in the Vedic religion. Milk, Ghee, Grain, Soma juice and Flesh of animals were offered to gods to propitiate them and obtain their favours. Animal sacrifices were common. The victims were usually sheep, goat, bull, barren cow or a horse. They were slaughtered and sacrificed and the flesh eaten at the end along with an intoxicating drink Soma. Elaborate procedures and rituals were evolved for the sacrifices. It was believed that sacrifices had power even over gods. But their efficacy depended on the exactness of the performance of the rituals. Only the priests, the Brahmins, knew the rituals and could perform the extraordinary sacrifices. So the position of the Brahmins became supreme, even above that of the king, in the society.⁶

The complicated rituals to be followed in the performance of the sacrifices are described in the Brahmanas, ascribed to the different Vedas. The most important of all the Brahmanas is the Satapatha-Brahmana which belong to the Yajurveda.

Eating meat

The code of conduct prescribed for the Aryans permits eating the flesh of certain kinds of animals and forbids the use of some others. Manu Smriti enjoins: "Let him not eat solitary or unknown beast and birds though they may fall under (the categories of) eatable (creatures), nor any five-toed animals. "The procupine, the hedgehog, the iguana, the rhino-

ceros, the tortoise and the hare they declare to be eatable; likewise those (domestic animals) that have teeth in one jaw only, excepting camels".⁷

Dharmasutra of Gautama adds: "Birds that feed striking with their beaks or scratching with their feet, and are not web-footed may be eaten. And fishes that are not misshapen, and (animals) that must be slain for (the fulfilment of) the sacred Law".⁸

The Chaturvarnya or Caste System

The caste system was considered to be divinely instituted. Manu Smriti declares: "But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet".⁹ Amongst these the preceding caste was superior by birth to the one following. The Sudras were ordained to serve the higher castes and thus achieve their destiny. Manu Smriti, VIII, 413 decrees: "But the Sudra, whether bought or unbought, he may compel to do servile work; for he was created by the Self existent (Svayambhu) to be the slave of a Brahmana".¹⁰ Further Manu teaches: "A Brahmana may confidently seize the goods of (his) Sudra (slave) for, as that (slave) can have no property, his master may take his possession."¹¹ The Apastamba Dharma-sutra adds: "To serve the other (three) castes (is ordained) for the Sudra. The higher the caste (which he serves) the greater is the merit."¹² Thus under the Vedic

6. Cf. B. N. Luniya, *Evolution of Indian Culture*, 10th edit. Agra, 1987, pp. 48-50. V. M. Apte, *Vedic Rituals*, in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, reprint, Calcutta, 1982, vol. I. pp. 234-263.

7. Manu Smriti, V:17 &18, Max Müller, *Sacred Books of the East*, Reprint, 1970, Vol. XXV, p. 172.

8. Gautama Dharma Sutra, XVII-35, 36, 37.

9. Manu Smriti, 1:31.

10. Manu Smriti, VIII:413

11. Ibid. VIII:417

12. Apastamba, 1, 1, 1:7-8.

dispensation the Sudras and outcastes or untouchables had no equality or rights either before the law or in the society.

The Four Ashramas

According to the Dharma Sastras every Dvija or twice-born was to pass through four stages during his life span. They were Brahmacharya Ashrama, Grihastha Ashrama, Vanaprastha Ashrama, and Sanyasa Ashrama. The Brahmachari or student was to spend the time in the study of the Vedas and other Sacred books, under the guidance of a teacher. After completing the education a person married and entered the second stage, Grihastha Ashrama, that of a householder. As the householder advances in age he is to go to the forest and lead a life of abstinence in a hermitage as a Bhikshu. When a householder sees his (skin) wrinkled, and (his hair) white, and the sons, of his sons then he may go to the forest,¹³ The fourth and last stage is that of Sanyasi or Vaikhanasa. This was a period of rigid austerity and self-mortification.

There was a provision for one to remain a lifelong student or Brahmachari under a teacher, if so desired.¹⁴ Such a student was called professed or Naishthika. Students who live with their teachers for a limited period, till they get married were called Upakurvana.

The Dharma Sutras allowed a Brahmachari to choose any of the other Ashramas after the studentship. Vasishtha Dharma Sutra says: "A man

who has studied one, two or three Vedas without violating the rules of studentship, may enter any of these (orders), whichever he pleases."¹⁵ Guatama Dharma Sutra adds: "Some (declare that) he (who has studied the Veda) may make his choice (which) among the orders (he is going to enter). The four orders are, (that of) the householder, (that of) the ascetic (bhikshu) and (that of) the hermit in the woods (vaikhanasa)".¹⁶

But it appears Manu discouraged the brahmachari to enter Vanaprastha or Sanyasa straight-away, and made Grihasthashrama almost compulsory. For he teaches: "A twice-born man who seeks final liberation, without having studied the Vedas, without having begotten sons and without having offered sacrifices, sinks downwards".¹⁷

A peculiarity with the Vanaprastha Ashrama was that a Vanaprastha was not obliged to abandon his wife. He could take her to the hermitage along with him. Manu Smriti states: "Abandoning all food raised by cultivation, and all his belongings, he may depart into the forest, either committing his wife to his sons, or accompanied by her".¹⁸

According to C. Kunhan Raja, "There is no mention of sannnyasins in the Vedic literature. In the Upanishads we come across rishis who had their abode in the forests. They could be only Vaikhanasas; they were in the stage that can be designated vanaprasthya in the four fold ashrama scheme. None of the rishis in the

13. Manu Smriti, VI, 2.

14. Ibid., II, 243.

15. Vasishtha Dharmasastra, VII, 3.

16. Gautama Dharma Sutra, III, 1, 2.

17. Manu Smriti, VI, 37.

18. Ibid., VI, 3. Cf. Dr. Babasahib Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1987, Vol. 4, pp. 205-214.

Upanishads or in the Puranas were sanyasins".¹⁹

Development of the Vedic religion

As a result of the contact with the indigenous people, the Dravidians and others, the early Vedic religion, underwent gradual changes. Many of the religious beliefs and practices of the natives were incorporated in the Arya Dharma. Most important gods of the Rig Vedic period like Indra, Varuna, Surya etc. were relegated to a subordinate position. Brahma or Prajapati became the chief god. Vishnu or Narayan and Rudra or Siva a non-Aryan god gained prominence. Siva was worshipped in the form of Linga. Naga or Snake-worship, veneration of the bull, the pipal tree etc. were borrowed from the non-Aryans. An amalgamation of the Aryan and non-Aryan religions was the final outcome.

Influence of Egypt and Sumer

The influence of Egypt and Mesopotamia (Sumer) on the religious thought of India, Dravidian and Aryan, makes an interesting study. It has been established that the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Sumer (Mesopotamia) and Indus Valley which flourished in the third millennium B.C. had close contacts with each other. Several records of old Egyptian dynasties show their relationship with India, for example there are inscriptions of XVII dynasty (1580-1350 B.C.). XVIII Thebas dynasty and XX dynasty (1198-1167 B.C.) Egyptian fleets carrying back ivory articles, cinnamon, precious stones, spices, monkeys etc. used to visit Indian

coasts. Of these articles some were available only in South India.²⁰

Chandra Gupta Maurya and his successors exchanged ambassadors with Egypt. During the reign of Bindusara (299-247 B.C.) Ptolemy Philadelphos, the ruler of Egypt had sent Dionysios as his envoy to Pataliputra the capital of the Mauryas. Asoka who came to the throne in 273 B.C. sent ambassadors and Buddhist missionaries to Egypt, Macedonia, Syria etc.²¹

There was a marked similarity between the religious practices of the Egyptians, Mesopotamians and the Indians as have been pointed out by several authors. For example, Gilbert Slater, after examining various evidences concludes, "That Dravidian civilization resembles that of Egypt and Mesopotamia in the importance of the influence in its evolution by religious ideal, and in the dominance of a priestly class or caste."²²

The Cobra and the Cow

Naga (Cobra) worship was common to the Egyptians and Indians from very early times. According to some, worship of Naga originated in Africa. Quoting the opinion of some other authors Slater writes: "Prof. Elliot Smith and Mr. Perry think that it came to India from Egypt, all rejecting the idea that it originated in India itself. But the range of the cobra both in Africa and Western Asia is wide, and in early days the numbers of cobras outside India probably much greater than now, and the sacred uraeus of the Egyptians was a cobra, hence the balance of probability appears to be in favour of the

19. C. Kunhan Raja, Vedic Culture, in *The Cultural History of India*, vol. I, p. 217.
20. Cf. P. T. Srinivas Iyengar, *History of the Tamils*, Reprint, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 96-100, V. D. Mahajan, *Ancient India*, 7th edit., New Delhi, 1974, p. 57.
21. Vidya Dhar Mahajan, *Advanced History of India*, pp. 114-15.
22. Gilbert Slater, *The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture*, reprint, New Delhi, 1982, p. 80.

Egyptian origin of this feature of Indian religion."²³

Another common feature was the divinity attributed to the cow. Slater continues: "And, as Prof. Elliot Smith reminds me, the original form of the Mother Goddess in Egypt was the Divine Cow, and that her worship was of extreme importance in Egypt from the fourth millenium onwards: and the Divine Bull was also of no small importance. Hence there is much to be said for the alternative hypotheses that the association of Siva with the Bull, and the doctrine of the sacredness of the cow, were fully established in India, as a result of Egyptian contact, in pre-Aryan times"²⁴

Simon Casie Chitty is another author who has made a comparative study of the religious beliefs of the Egyptians and Indians. He describes how several objects of worship and some of the beliefs are common to both. The Egyptians divinized the ox, the ape, crocodile, etc. the same way as the cow, the cobra, ape (Hanuman) etc. are venerated in India. Killing any of these animals was considered by both as a heinous sin. The Egyptians worshipped the phallus which was concecrated to Osris just as Siva Lingam is worshipped in India. Belief in transmigration of the soul was also common among the Egyptians and Indians.²⁵

The Lotus

For the Egyptians of old the lotus was a sacred flower and it was dedi-

cated to the goddess Isis. It ornamented the head of Osiris. According to others it adorned the head of goddess Nefer-tem from the Memfris region.²⁶

Holy Ganges and Nile

River Nile was held sacred by the Egyptians and was considered to have some divine power. A ritual bath in Nile, they believed, would purify anyone from all the stains of sin, as is the case with the Ganges for the Indians. Simon Casie Chitty notes: "The Egyptians venerated the Nile and ascribed to its waters a purifying and divine virtue. The Brahmans also venerate the rivers, particularly the Ganges, which effaces sins, how heinous soever, committed by such as bathe in its waters"²⁷

Any one who drowned in the Nile was divinized, according to Egyptians.²⁸ Similarly the Euphrates was venerated by the Babylonians and used for sacred baths. It is possible that the Egyptian custom came to India through the Babylonians with whom the Indus people were in close contact.²⁹

The Diwali

The Egyptians had a festival similar to the Diwali. On that occasion they hung up large number of lights around every house all over Egypt, especially at Sais. Thus the origin of the diwali or Deepavali is traced to Egypt.³⁰

Others would say that Divali originated in India and it was the

23. Ibid. pp. 84-85.

24. Ibid. p. 109.

25. Simon Casie Chitty, *The Castes, Customs, Manners and Literature of the Tamils*, reprint, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 19-20.

26. Ibid. p. 20; Cf. also *Cath. Encyclopedia*, on *Egyptian Religion*, Vol. , p. 207.

27. Simon Casie Chitty, *op. cit.* p. 19-20.

28. Cf. *Cath. Ency. On Baptism*, Vol. II. p. 54.

29. Ibid. p. 54.

30. S. C. Chitty, *op. cit.* pp. 20-21.

Egyptians that carried the festival to their country. Whatever it be, Diwali is not a mere Festival of Lights. To this day, in India it is day of religious significance, connected with mythological deities and beliefs, and rituals of worship are performed as part of the celebration.³¹

Vedism, Brahminism, Hinduism

For a clear understanding of religious Hinduism it will be helpful to distinguish three distinct stages of its evolution. These stages may be called Vedic religion, Brahminism and modern Hinduism.³²

The early Vedic religion was very simple and ritualistic. Philosophical speculations, besides the impact of the religious beliefs of the indigenous people, resulted in a process of evolution of the religion. The idea of natural phenomena, of gods, life, the universe etc. had undergone changes. Concepts of Brahma, Nirvana, Karma etc. were developed. There was emphasis on the performance of sacrifices. But at the same time practice of tapas or renunciation, meditation and acquisition of spiritual knowledge were considered important. The Upanishads held that Nirvana or Moksha could be attained through Jnana or knowledge. By the time the later Vedic works, the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads were composed there was a thorough transformation of the early Vedic religion. This stage of Hinduism may be considered as Brahminism.

"The Atharvaveda", writes one author, "forms an intermediate step

in the transition of the Vedic religion and the later Hinduism as it embodies the religious beliefs of the Aryans when they had accepted some non-Aryan beliefs as their religion".³³

It is possible to make another distinction also, with regard to Hinduism, Doctrinal or Philosophical Hinduism and popular Hinduism. Popular Hinduism consists more of popular cults and religious practices like the worship of Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Siva and other Hindu gods and goddesses, making pilgrimages to sacred places etc. without looking for a philosophical basis.

Jainism

There arose about the sixth century B. C numerous reform movements in the Hindu society, that questioned the teachings of the Vedic religion and its rituals and the Supremacy of the Brahmin class; they presented a new vision of life and the soul and preached new ways to attain salvation. Two of these, Jainism and Buddhism, gained momentum, became well organized, and developed their own doctrines, so that they came to be considered as different religions.

The word 'Jaina' is derived from Jina which means conqueror, one who has conquered himself, his passions. Those who are believed to have overcome all worldly passions by self-denial and freed themselves from the cycle of rebirths and attained moksha are worshipped as Jins.

According to Jaina tradition Risabha was the founder of Jainism.

31. Cf. R. V. Smith, A Nine-Day Wonder ?, Egyptian Diwali Long Ago, article in Sunday Statesman, Calcutta, Nov. 7, 1982; Ibid. V. S. M., Diwali Indian style; also Avin Kunnekkadan, Diwali the Feast of Light, article in The Examiner, Nov. 12, 1988, pp. 1097-98.
32. Cf. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Bombay, Vol. 4, pp. 284-87.
33. S. N. Sen, Ancient Indian History and Civilization, New Delhi, 1988, p. 34.

He was followed by 24 Prophets-Tirthankaras. Vardhamana Mahavira who was the 24th and last Tirthankara occupies a unique position in the development of the Jaina religious system and is often considered to have founded the Jaina religion.

Mahavira was born in a suburb of Vaishali, in Bihar, about 540 B. C. in a Kshatriya family. At the age of thirty he left his home and became an ascetic. Practising severe asceticism, subjecting himself to self-torture and self-mortification, he is said to have attained 'perfect enlightenment'—after a few years. He spent the rest of his life wandering from place to place preaching his message. He is believed to have died at the age of seventy-two.

The Universe, according to Jaina theory is eternal. Jainism does not acknowledge a God, a Supreme Being, the Creator of the universe. There are gods, but they are only embodied souls. A soul in the highest state is a god.

Jainism teaches that everything in the world, animals vegetables and also material things as earth, water, fire and air possesses a soul. To kill a life, even a small insect, is a sin, and is an obstacle to the attainment of emancipation or Nirvana. So ahimsa, non-violence or non-injury is of great importance, and is a fundamental principle of Jainism.

There occurred a schism in Jainism perhaps in the second century A. D., centering around the type of asceticism to be followed by the monks. One group wanted a stricter norm 'Jina-Kalpa' and the other a more liberal form 'sthavirakalpa.' The former held that monks should not use any cloth, they should be Digambara (Skyclad or nude), which means total non-possession. The other sect allowed the monks to wear white clothes; hence they are called Svethambaras (white clad).

The Digambaras say that many of their earliest sacred books are lost. They accept as authoritative the texts known as Shatkhandagama and some books written by Kunda Kunda-charya (first century B. C.) The canonical texts of the Svethambaras include: The eleven Angas, twelve Upangas, ten Prakirnas, six Chhedaustras, four Mulastras and some Miscellaneous texts. Besides, there are several non-canonical works in the form of commentaries. Among the later Jain literature the Tattvarthasutra, a philosophical work by Umasvati (Uma Swami) in the first century A. D. is very important. Its authority is accepted by both the Digambaras and the Svethambaras.

The way of deliverance consists of three basic rules of behaviour, or three gems (tri—ratnans): Right faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct. The last, Right Conduct means non-injury (ahimsa), speaking truth (satya), non-stealing (asteya), Chastity (brahmacharya) and non-possession or renunciation (aparigraha). Jainism rejected the authority of the Vedas, denied the efficacy of the Brahminic sacrifices and disregarded the Chaturvarna or caste system.

Mahavira instituted a monastic order for men and women. People of all castes were initiated into the order. The rules prescribed to be followed were very rigorous and austere.

Jaina monks and nuns travelled to various parts of India propagating the teachings of the Tirthankaras. Jainism spread all over the country and it still remains a living religion.

Jains have contributed much to the development of the cultural heritage of India in various fields, in literature, Philosophy and other sciences. Exquisite Jaina temples erected in various places, on hill-tops and secluded valleys, with elaborate stone carvings, stone umbrellas and

decorative pillars remain as monuments of Jaina architecture and art. P. N. Chopra writes: "The sacred books of the Jains are equally important for their contribution to scientific concepts. They evolved their own theories about mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, alchemy the fundamental structure of living beings, the concept of subjects and time and the theory of relativity."³⁴

Buhler a German scholar says: "In grammar, in astronomy as well as in all branches of belles lettres the achievements of the Jains have been so great that even their opponents have taken notice of them and that some of their works are of importance for European Science even today. In the South where they have worked among the Dravidian peoples, they have also promoted the development of these languages. The Kanarese, Tamil, Telugu literary languages rest on the foundations erected by the Jain monks".³⁵

Buddhism

Gautama Sidhartha, the founder of Buddhism was born in the sixth century B. C., according to common opinion, about 563 B. C., at Lumbini in Nepal on the Indian border. His father was the chief of a Sakya clan. Sidhartha was married and had a son. At the age of 29, soon after the birth of his son Rahul, he decided to renounce the world and abandoned his home. For a few years he wandered as an ascetic and then retired to Uruvela, near modern Bodhgaya, and sought the attainment of truth by practising rigorous mortification and penances. Finally he experienced 'enlightenment' and came to be known as Buddha or "The Enlightened One".

This is said to have happened when he was thirty five years of age. The remaining period of his life was devoted to preaching his religion, going from town to town and village to village till his death at the age of 80.

Buddha did not teach anything about God. So Buddhism is considered a code of ethics rather than a religion. Like Mahavira he rejected the Vedas, Vedic sacrifices, and Vedanta. But he believed in karma and rebirth. The ultimate goal of one's life was to attain Nirvana, a state of happiness, completely free from selfish desires. This is to be achieved through right conduct and the practice of virtues.

Buddhist Scriptures

The Buddhist scriptures written in Pali, consist of three Pitakas (baskets)—the Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka and the Abhidhamma Pitaka. Added to these are the Jatakas, stories connected with Buddha, and Vibhashas which are commentaries on the canonical texts.

The fundamental principles of Buddhism are contained in the 'Four Noble Truths' (Aryasacca or Aryasattya) and the 'Noble Eightfold Path' (Arya Atthangika-marga or Arya Ash-tanga-marga). The Four Noble Truths concern sorrow, Dukkha. They are:

1. The reality or existence of Dukkha
2. The cause of sorrow, which is desire (Trishna) for earthly things
3. Remedy or destruction of sorrow
4. The 'path' or marga that leads to the destruction of desires.

Trishna or desire is responsible for the births and rebirths. When Trishna, desire, has ceased one obtains Nirvana.

34. P. N. Chopra, *Religions and Communities of India*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 160.

35. S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 60. For a detailed treatise on Jainism cf. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I, pp. 400-441.

The Path or Marga to remove desires is Eight-fold, Arya Ashtanga-marga. They are:

1. Right Views of Faith
2. Right Aims or Aspiration
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Awareness of Mindfulness
8. Right Contemplation

The Sangha or Religious Order

Buddha organized a religious order for men. The monks were known as Bhikkus (Bhikshus). Membership of the Sangha was open to persons of all castes. Later he established an Order for women. Members were required to observe the discipline of the Sangha leading a life of poverty, celibacy, austerity, devotion and simplicity. Ahimsa non-killing or non-injury was very much emphasised. It was one of the ten precepts a monk was to accept and follow. Monasteries (Viharas) were erected to give suitable accommodation to the monks and nuns. Gradually these Viharas became centres of religious studies and missionary activity.

The Bhikkus and bhikkunis went about with great missionary zeal to spread the message of Buddha throughout the country. As a result Buddhism spread rapidly all over India. Vast numbers of non-Aryans and low caste people were attracted to the new faith. It became a religion of the masses.

The Mauryan Emperor Asoka (273-238 B. C.), whose empire extended from Afghanistan to Assam, and from Nepal to Mysore, was converted to Buddhism, according to tradition, some time after the Kalinga war (C. 255

B. C). He became a great propagator of Buddhism. He sent Buddhist missionaries to Ceylon, Egypt, Macedonia, Syria and other countries.³⁶ Under him Buddhism enjoyed the privilege of a state religion. Eventually Buddhism occupied the position of the most prominent religion in India.

Buddhism flourished in India till the end of 7th century A. D. L. P. Sharma writes: "Buddhism, at one time, provided religious unity to Indian people because there had been a time when Buddhism prevailed all over India as the most dominant religion".³⁷

Hinayana and Mahayana

Hinayana and Mahayana are the two major sects of Buddhism. Yana means a vehicle, a ferry-boat. Hinayana signifies 'inferior vehicle' and Mahayana 'superior vehicle'. Mahayana was a later development. The division into two major sects is said to have taken place in the first century A. D., during the reign of Emperor Kanishka. The sacred books of Mahayana were written in Pali language, and the canon of the Mahayana in Sanskrit. Mahayana is closer to Hinduism.

Mahayanism introduced new elements and theories which radically changed the original Buddhism. The idea of the Bodhisattva was a basic feature of Mahayana. The Bodhisattvas are individuals who are in the process of attaining perfect Buddhahood, passing through several lives. They are concerned about the well being of human beings and are compassionate. Through their prayers and sufferings they assist people on earth and they are real benefactors of humanity. Many scholars find the influence of Christianity in this new development, and with good reason.

36. Cf. Vidya Dhar Mahajan, *Advanced History of India*, 2nd edit. New Delhi, 1983, p. 115.

37. L. P. Sharma, *Ancient History of India*, New Delhi, 1981, p. 85.

The concept of Bodhisattva is very similar to that of Christ who suffered and offered his life for the redemption of humanity. It was during the early centuries of Christianity that the idea of Bodhisattva was developed in Buddhism. Persia was a stronghold of Christianity, outside the Roman Empire, from very early period and the Buddhist monks who were in Persia and Syria from the time of Asoka had ample opportunities to be acquainted with Christian teachings. Nagarjuna one of the greatest exponents on Mahayanism was born in Vidharbha (Berar) in the South Maharashtra and he too could have come into contact with Christians in South India.

A. L. Basham says: "Moreover, the Bodhisattva was thought of as a spirit not only of compassion but also suffering. In more than one source we read the vow or resolve of the Bodhisattva, which is sometimes expressed in almost Christian terms: 'I take upon myself ... the deeds of all being ... I take their suffering upon me, ... I agree to suffer as a ransom for all beings, for the sake of all beings'. The suffering Bodhisattva so closely resembles the Christian conception of God who gives his life as a ransom for many that we cannot dismiss the possibility that the doctrine was borrowed by Buddhism from Christianity, which was vigorous in Persia from the 3rd century A. D. onwards".³⁸

Among other authors who speak about the influence of Christianity on Mahayana Buddhism, Har Dayal writes: "Christianity certainly influenced the development of Mahayana Buddhism

at the later period and was also influenced by Buddhism to some extent. There were several channels of communication between the Buddhists and the Christian countries of Western Asia, Africa, and Europe. The Buddhists could establish intercourse with the Christians in Alexandria, Southern India and Central Asia".³⁹

It was due to the influence of Jainism and Buddhism that Ahimsa was accepted as a principle in Hinduism and many Hindus turned vegetarians.

It is said Asoka and Kanishka prohibited animal sacrifices. It was a terrible blow for Brahmanism.

Monasticism

Hinduism did not have any regular religious order or monasteries where communities of monks lived together. There were even before the time of Buddha, Hindu ascetics, and Brahminism prescribed Vanaprastha and Sanyasa Ashramas. But these did not constitute a fraternity of monks or nuns. V. D. Mahajan says: "Another contribution of the Buddhists was the monastic system. It is true that even before Buddhism, many Hindus went to the Jungles but the monastic system as such did not exist before Buddhism. In the Buddhist Samgha a separate fraternity of monks was created and they obeyed a common head and lived together under a common code of discipline".⁴⁰

Sri Sankaracharya was greatly influenced by Buddhism. During his time, in the 8th century A. D. Buddhism was prevalent in Kerala, the birth place of Sankara. Christianity

38. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That was India*, 8th impr., New Delhi, 1988 pp. 277-78.

39. Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, reprint, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 40-41.

40. A Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, Revised edit., Madras, 1984, p. 125. For detailed treatise cf. A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism*, Revised edit. New Delhi, 1980.

also was well established in the region. He must have been acquainted with the teachings of both these religions. Sankara rejected Pantheism. His monism was very close to the "Void", 'Sunya' or Nirvana of Mahayanism. Sankara has been called by his Hindu adversaries a Praschanna Buddha or disguised Buddhist. A. Shreedhara Menon says: "Sankara borrowed some of the popular features of the Buddhist faith and reformed Hindu religion on new and attractive lines. He accepted the Buddhist ideal of monasticism and laid the foundations of a strong Brahminical papal organization by setting up four great Hindu Mutts in the four corners of India... He was so critical of the Mimamsakas and his organizational activities were so reminiscent of the Buddhist way of life that the charge was levelled against Sankara that he was a Praschanna Budha or disguised Buddhist".

Christianity

Early Christianity in India: Socio-Religious situation in the South

Christianity in India is as old as Christianity itself having been founded by Mar Thoma Sleeha, one of the Apostles of Christ. Even though there were Christians from the first centuries in Thakshasila (Taxila) and possibly in other parts of North India, Christianity was well established and widespread in the South. It was South India that gave shape to Christianity in India. An enquiry into the socio-cultural and religious background of South India during the first centuries of the Christian era will throw more light on certain aspects of the Church and Christian life in this land during the early period.

Who were the inhabitants of South India at the beginning of Christianity?

What was their language? What was their religion? Did they have any contact with the outside world? What was their socio-political set up? It is not possible to find definite answers to these questions. But we do have a lot of information. Further insights into the history and culture of the people of South India may necessitate a re-appraisal of some of the popular conceptions about early Christianity in this land of St. Thomas.

The vast majority of the population inhabiting Southern India, before and during the early Christian era were the Dravidians. There were the Negrito races and Proto-Austroloids, but they mainly inhabited the hilly regions. By and large the Dravidians occupied the plains and coastal areas on the East and West. They had their own language, their own religion and culture.

Most of South India, excluding Deccan, was known as Tamilakam. It was divided into three Tamil kingdoms, Chola, Pandya and Chera. Asoka (3rd Century B. C.) in one of his edicts has mentioned these kingdoms as adjacent to his empire. "In the whole dominion of king Devanampriya Priyadarsin, as also in the adjacent countries, as Chola, Pandya, Satyaputra, Keralaputra, as far as Tamaraparni... the system of caring for the sick, both of men and cattle, followed by king Devanampriya Priyadarsin, has been everywhere brought into practice". Keralaputra refers to Chera of Kerala. Devanampriya, literally 'Beloved of God' was another name for Asoka.⁴¹

The Dravidians of Tamilakam, including Chera, had a common culture and a common language, Chen-Tamil. Malayalam evolved as a distinct language only by the ninth century A. D.

Religion of the people

At the beginning of the Christian era the vast majority of the people of

41. Cf. William Logan, *Malabar*, Reprint, Trivandrum, 1981; p. 218.

the South practised the Dravidian religion. It appears the Dravidians had not developed a particular religious system or any set of doctrines. They worshipped totem gods and spirits. Kottavai the war goddess was prominent among the goddesses. Food-offerings were made with ritual dances to propitiate the gods and goddesses. Ancestor worship also was practised.⁴²

Jainism and Buddhism found early entry into the South. Jainism is supposed to have been introduced in the third century B. C. It gained a considerable number of followers.

There were several Jain shrines which were later converted in Hindu temples. Matilakam, Kudalmanikkam temple at Irijalikuda, Kalli near Perumbavur, Edakkal Bhagavati temple near Sultan Battery. Bhagavati temple at Tiruchunattumala in Kanyakumari District, Nataraja temple at Nagercoil etc. were once Jain temples.⁴³ The decline of Jainism in Kerala started in the eighth century A. D.

It is assumed that Buddhism was introduced into the South, in the third century B. C. during the reign of Asoka. Buddhism had a greater acceptance among the local Dravidians. During the first centuries of the Christian era Buddhism became somewhat strong and had considerable influence on the society. There were several Buddhist Viharas or monasteries in different parts of the Tamil Kingdoms. Some of the prominent Hindu temples of the present day are believed to have been once Buddhist shrines and Viharas. We may mention a few among them. Vadakkunnathan temple in Trichur, Kurumba Bhagavati temple in Cranganore, Durga temple

at Paruvasseri in Trichur District, were a few among them. Some scholars are of opinion that the famous Saastha Ayyappan of Sabarimala is a Hinduised Buddha. A large number of Buddha images have been found in Quilon and Alleppey Districts.⁴⁴

The Buddhist religion began to decline from the 8th century A.D. as a result of vigorous propaganda led by Hindu reformers like Sankaracharya. It appears that Buddhists were some times subjected to violent attacks. A. S. Menon says: "The new Aryan missionaries devoted all their attention to propaganda against Buddhism and Jainism whose hold on the people was the main stumbling block to the success of their ideology ... It is also possible that the Aryan missionaries resorted to deliberate policy of destroying Buddhist Viharas and images. The broken and damaged Buddhist images obtained from such places as Karumadi and Pallikkal, perhaps, bear testimony to this".⁴⁵

Aryanization

The question of the date of the Aryanization of Southern India has a direct bearing on the history of the Church in India. As a result of recent studies, several scholars have come to the conclusion that Aryanization of Tamilakam took place only after the 8th century A.D., that is, the migration of the Aryans on any large scale, and the predominance of Brahminism and Aryan culture in the society, is not to be dated before the 8th century of the Christian era. Probably small batches of Aryans came and settled in the Southern parts of the country even before the Christian era, but they were in insignificant numbers

42. A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.* p. 71, 74.

43. *Ibid.* pp. 75-76.

44. *Ibid.* pp. 77-80.

45. *Ibid.* p. 83.

and did not have any considerable influence on the society. For long Vindhya remained the boundary between Aryavarta and Deksinpatha. The Aryans penetrated further to the Deccan and had influenced Dravidians culture, before the Christian era. But Tamilakam still remained unassailed by Aryanism.

A. Sreedhara menon writes: "In the 8th century A.D. the Aryanization of Kerala reached its climax with a major batch of Brahmin immigrants coming here ... The Aryan influence increased considerably in the 9th century as is evidenced by the work of Sankaracharya (788-820) and other Hindu reformers"⁴⁶ What is said about Kerala is true about the whole of Tamilakam.

Logan, after weighing various reasons says that the Aryans or Brahmans settled down in Kerala and became powerful in the eighth century A.D.: "... it may also be inferred that they became a power in the land somewhere between the early years of the eighth century and the year A.D. 774"⁴⁷ Further he says: "This again points to the Vedic Brahman immigration having been in the early years of the eighth century A.D., and to their having coming into Malabar by way of the coast from the Tulu country (South Canara)"⁴⁸

Evidence from Tamil Literature

We have a very valuable source of information about the cultural and religious life of the Dravidian South during the early Christian centuries. They are the Tamil works of Sangam age and Post Sangam age. The Sangam age according to the general view,

corresponds to the first four centuries of the Christian era. Most important works of this period are the anthologies Patittupattu (Ten Tens) Agananuru (Agam Four Hundred) and Purananuru (Puram Four Hundred). Silappadikaram and Manimekhala are two great epics and are ascribed to the Post Sangam period which extends from the sixth to eighth century A.D. However there is no unanimity among the scholars about the period of their composition, some holding the view that they were written earlier. Manimekhala is considered to be the work of a Buddhist, and it extols the tenets of Buddhism. Silapadikaram upholds Jaina beliefs. These works are the common property of the people of Tamilakam, including Keralites. The author of Silapatikaram, Illango Adikal hailed from the Chera kingdom.

The literary works of the Sangam age show that the Aryan culture and Sanskrit language had not influenced Dravidians till that time. Towards the later period, that is, fifth and sixth centuries, we find references to the Aryans, which show that already some contacts were established with them and possibly some of them had settled down in the South. Srinivas Iyengar writes: "Much of the early Tamil poetry is lost, but enough remains to prove that for some time even after the beginning of the Christian era, there was absolutely no intrusion of Sanskrit culture into the minds of Tamil poets"⁴⁹

Elsewhere he says: "Into the poems that were composed in the IV and V centuries A.D., slowly, very slowly entered chiefly by way of allusions Northern (Aryan) ideas, concepts, beliefs and superstitions.

46. Ibid. p. 81.

47. William Logan, op. cit. p. 314.

48. Ibid. p. 315.

49. P. T. Srinivas Iyengar, History of the Tamils, Reprint, New Delhi, 1982, p. 155.

These are found mostly in the odes composed by the latest poets. The total number of such Aryan intrusions are very few when compared with the genuine Tamil ideas, customs and beliefs".⁵⁰

Hinduism became a dominant religion in the South only in the 8th century A.D., at the expense of Jainism and Buddhism. Sankaracharya was instrumental in weakening the hold of Jainism and Buddhism on the people and establishing Hinduism, for the first time, as a strong force in Kerala. The arrival of a large contingent of Brahmins from the North strengthened his efforts. Sreedhara Menon writes on the rise of Hinduism and the decline of Jainism and Buddhism in the South. "It has been the practice among scholars to refer to the Hindu religious stir of this period in South India as a 'revival' or renaissance", but it is a misnomer to call it so. It was only one of the religions which had a minor position in the land. Hence what happened in the age of the Kulasekharas was not a revival of the Hindu religion but its spectacular establishment as the predominant religion of the land at the expense of the rival faiths like Jainism and Buddhism and the Dravidian forms of worship. The triumph of Hinduism was the natural corollary of the progress of Aryanization which reached its climax in the 8th century A.D. with the influx of a fresh and influential batch of Brahmin immigrants into Kerala from outside".⁵¹ The Kulasekhara age begins with the 9th century A.D.

Chaturvarnya or the caste system was a corollary of Aryanization. Until the 8th century A.D. Kerala and Southern India did not practise caste distinctions. Logan's opinion is that, "The final organization of the castes in Malabar probably took place about the 8th century A.D. Simultaneously with the rise of the Nambutiri Brahmans to power and influence".⁵²

Jewish Settlements

The Jews of Palestine had trade relations with South India at least from the time of king Solomon.⁵³ It is believed that a great number of Jews who fled Mayorca in the 5th century B.C. during the time of king Kobad came to India and settled down on the Malabar coast. Muzuris was the most important port in South India frequented by foreign ships. It is fairly certain that there was a Jewish colony at Muzuris from the 5th century B.C.⁵⁴ The Jews were enterprising merchants and they had established colonies in different towns in the South along the coast which were centres of trade. Most of the places connected with early Christianity in the South are coastal towns and the Jews possibly had settled down in these places. Cranganore or Muzuris, Kalyan, Thana, Mylapore, Quilon or Kollam, Parur - all come under this category. It must have been these Jewish settlements that attracted Mar Thoma Sleeha to South India, and according to tradition the first Christians were Jewish converts.⁵⁵

Aramaic or Syriac was the language spoken by the Jews. It was

50. Ibid. p. 463.

51. Sreedhara Menon, op. cit. p. 124.

52. William Logan, op. cit. p. 143.

53. Cf. 1 Kings, 10:22; S. S. Koder, Kerala and Her Jews, Ernakulam, 1965, p. 2. Logan, op. cit. pp. 284-85.

54. Cf. S. S. Koder, in The Cochin Synagogue, 400th Anniversary Souvenir, (Mosseh Pereyra De Paiva) p. 38.

55. Cf. Ramban Pattu.

the medium of communication for the whole East in international trade and commerce.

The discovery of the monsoon winds by Hippalus C.A.D. 47 revolutionized the trade with Rome, Egypt and the Middle East. It was now possible for the navigators from the west to visit Indian sea ports and return with pepper and spices during the course of the same year. Pliny (AD. 23-79) wrote: "The voyage is now made every year".⁵⁶ Further he says: "... They begin the navigation in the middle of summer ... and arrive in about thirty days at Ocelis in Arabia ... From thence they sail with the wind called Hippalos in forty days to the first commercial station on India named Muziris".⁵⁷ Longan makes this observation: "But it will be seen that, had he (St. Thomas) been so minded, he would have found in these annual pepper fleets every facility for effecting his journey to Malabar".⁵⁸

From what has been seen above we could reasonably draw the following conclusions:

1. The first Christians in South India were Jewish settlers who were converted to the faith, as confirmed by tradition. The local people were the Dravidians and with conversions from among them the number of the faithful increased.
2. When the Jewish believers met together to pray and worship they must have used the Aramaic or Syriac language.
3. In a mixed congregation of Jewish and native believers they must have used Aramaic and Chen-Tamil, the vernacular. Singing of

psalms and reading passages from the Bible was in Syriac. The official liturgy used to be in Syriac. There is no trace of any liturgy in the vernacular, Chen-Tamil.

4. Among the natives who became Christians there were probably those who were following the Dravidian religious practices and others who followed Jainism and Buddhism.
5. The first batches of Aryans, Bramins, who settled down in Tamilakam could have arrived before the beginning of the Christian era. So we cannot altogether rule out the possibility of a few Aryan settlers among the early Christians.
6. Hinduism was not prevalent in the South, and the Jains and the Buddhists reject the authority of the Vedas. So there was little chance of Vedism or Brahminism influencing the religious thought of the early Christians in India.
7. Caste system was not practised among the Dravidians in the South before the 8th century A. D. So there is no possibility of the Christian community practising such a social discrimination. Caste behaviour must have crept into the community only in recent centuries, with mass conversions from the low castes after the coming of the Portuguese missionaries.
8. Because of the annual pepper fleets there were constant, almost yearly, exchanges between the Jewish Christian merchants in South India and in Persia and Mesopotamia. Whatever development made in the form of prayers and worship in one place was interchanged. Those Christians who visited South

56. Pliny, quoted in Logan, op. cit. p. 289

57. Ibid. p. 289.

58. Ibid. 291.

India must have prayed and worshipped together with the local believers, 'breaking bread' in their assembly.

9. There is a tradition which says that in 345 A. D. a batch of Syrian Christians came and settled down in Cranganore. Others think that the first syrian immigration took place much later. Under the circumstances described above, we cannot imagine that the Christians in Persia and Mesopotamia remained without any contact with Malabar and after three centuries a group came with their Syrian liturgy, so far unknown to the Indian Christians, and introduced it in India.
10. Among the St. Thomas Christians there are some customs and practices which are common with the high caste Hindus. The social standing of these Christians was also high. So we may conclude that there were conversions from among them after the 8th century.
11. During the early Christian centuries Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were not considered as separate religions. The term Hindu had no religious significance until the 19th century. So if some ancient authors have used the word 'Brahman', we have to examine the context, whether it was used in a general sense, to designate followers of non-Christian faiths, as terms like pagan and Gentile were applied in general to all non-Christians or non-Jews in the past.

Influence of Christianity on Hinduism

Modern Hinduism has been very much influenced by Christianity. The extent of influence has not been sufficiently propped up. Several scholars are of the opinion that the Mahabharata in the present form, after going through several recensions, is of the 3rd or 4th century A. D.⁵⁹ A number of episodes of Christ's life, as a king trying to kill the new-born babe, massacre of innocent children, miracles of walking on the water, multiplying food, the transfiguration, curing a hunch-backed etc. are attributed to Krishna also. The parallels are so many that it cannot be brushed aside as mere coincidence. So it is inferred that they are adaptations of Gospel narratives.⁶⁰

Manimekhala is a Buddhist work. Some of the ideas and doctrines expressed there appear to be clear Christian teachings. J. J. Morris has pointed out some examples. If his translation of the relevant verses are correct it is amazing: "Adi Mudalavan" = the First Being, "Mudalavan Makan" = Son of the First Being, "Kuttam ketuthone" = One who destroys sin, "Ulaka non pin Uyarthoi" = one who resurrected after sufferings in the world"⁶¹ etc. clearly apply to Christ.

Tirukkural is a masterpiece of Tamil literature, and as M. Ariel puts it, "One of the highest and purest expressions of human thought".⁶² The author of Tirukkural, Tiruvalluva-Nayanar or better known as Tiruvallur, is considered to be a pariah weaver who lived near San Thome, Mylapore about the 8th century A. D. There was

59. Cf. S. N. Sen, op. cit. p. 46; B. N. Lulia, op. cit. p. 72.

60. Cf. *Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, 1981 edition, New York, Vol. 2, on Bakti-Marga, p. 548-49; G. A. Grierson, *Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians*, JRS 1907, pp. 311-335; Edamarath V. Sebastian, *Peter and Vedavyasa* (Malayalam), Trichur, 1929.

61. Cf. J. J. Morris, *Kerala in First Millenium A. D.*, Quilon, 1984, pp. 52-56.

62. M. Ariel, quoted, Rev. G. U. Pope in *Introduction, The Sacred Kural*, Reprint, New Delhi, 1982. p. i.

a Christian community at Mylapore from the early times and it is quite possible that Tiruvallur was inspired by the teachings of Christ. G. U. Pope, in his Introduction to the Sacred Kurral Wrote: "It is undoubtedly a noteworthy fact that from this Mylapore, on which the eyes of Christendom have ever rested as the one sacred spot in India of Apostolic labour, comes the one Oriental book, much of whose teaching is an echo of the 'Sermon on the Mount'".⁶³

Kalady, Sankaracharya's birth place, was hardly 30km from Cranganore and 30 km from Parur which were Christian centres from the very beginning. Sankara was a Hindu reformer who preached a novel doctrine, though based on the Upanishads. His theory of Advaita, monism, it has been pointed out, resembles in some aspects to Buddhism, and he was probably influenced by it. Even though Sankara upheld Advaita and salvation through knowledge, he is said to have composed some of the finest devotional songs in Sanskrit, which in practice meant Bhakthi. Was it the result of his association with the Christians and the knowledge of their faith? Logan makes this observation about Malayali Hinduism in the South: "It has borrowed from Christianity, with which, probably for the first time, Hinduism came into contact in Malabar—some of the loftiest ideas of Pure theism".⁶⁴

Brahminism, Buddhism and Jainism came from the North to the South. But the Bhakthi form of cult originated in the South and flowed to the North, and all parts of India transforming Hinduism into its present form.

As A.L. Basham says, "The final form of Hinduism was largely the result of influence from the Dravidian South. Here, on the basis of indigenous cults fertilized by Aryan influences, theistic schools had arisen, characterized by intense ecstatic piety. It was this devotional religion, propagated by many wandering preachers and hymn-singers in the medieval period, which had the greatest effect on Hinduism as it exists today".⁶⁵

After Sankara there were two other outstanding Acharyas or Hindu theologians from the South, Ramanuja, in the 12th century, who taught at Srirangam and Madhava in the 13th century, born at Udipi. The Advaita of Madhava is closest to Christian teaching. On his theory, Basham writes as follows: "An interesting feature of Madhava's theology is the important part played by the wind-god Vayu, the son of Vishnu, who is his agent in the world and has some of the features of the Holy Ghost of Christian theology. The resemblances of Madhava's system to christianity are so striking that influences, perhaps through the Syrian Christians of Malabar is almost certain".⁶⁶

On its part Eastern Christianity has accepted many elements, not in doctrine but in religious practice, from India, especially from Buddhism. Processions, festivals etc. were a common feature for Buddhists, Hindus and Christians.

The term 'palli' seems to be of Buddhist origin. The Buddhists used to call their Viharas by the name Palli. It came to be applied to religious institutions of other non-Hindus, Christians and Muslims, as Palli

63. Ibid. Introduction, p. iii.

64. William Logan, op. cit. p. 221.

65. A. L. Basham, op. cit. p. 301.

66. Ibid. p. 336.

(Church) Pallikkudam, Ezhuthupalli etc.

Similarly, "Bauddha" was not a term reserved to Buddhists alone. Christians and Muslims too were sometimes known by the name "Baudda". May be that they were also considered "enlightened".

Christianity and Buddhism came into contact in Alexandria, Syria, Persia and South India. There were mutual exchanges and enrichment. What Christianity in the East, outside the Roman Empire, received from Indian sources, was passed on to the west through the Persian church. In the words of Logan, "It is certain that Indian ideas and practices contributed largely to the form which orthodox Christianity in the west finally adopted. Monasteries, and nunneries, tonsures, rosaries, confession, and celibacy all seem to have found their way to Europe from Indian Sources".⁶⁷

Islam

Islam, among the religions of India, has the second largest following with over 75.5 million believers, which is 11.35 of the total population. In the wider context, the Indian subcontinent has two Muslim majority countries, namely, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Islam was introduced into South India by the Muslim Arabs who arrived as traders and settled down on the Malabar coast about the end of the 7th century A.D.⁶⁸ The spread of Islam in North India started with the establishment of Muslim rule over vast territories in the North by Shahab-ud-din Ghorî in the 12th century.

Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was born at Mecca, in Arabia about

A.D.570. When he was about 40 years of age he went into seclusion on Mount Hira, near Mecca, where spent much time in fasting and meditation. There, it is believed, he had the vision of angel Gabriel and received through him revelations of God. The visions and revelations continued for a few years. These revelations transmitted to the Prophet are recored in the Koran, ("reading"), the Holy Writ of Islam.

Authoritative traditions and customs of the early followers of Mohammed were compiled after the death of the Prophet, to serve as guidelines for the religious and social life of the muslims. These are known as the Sunna, literally "Habit". The collections dealing with the words and deeds of the Prophet and his companions are called Hadith, "Traditions" in a narrower sense.

Differences of opinion among the followers of Mohammed gave rise to two main sects, the Shia and Sunni. The latter is more orthodox. The majority of Indian Muslims have been of the Sunni persuasion.

There are many things common in the teachings of Christianity and Islam⁶⁹.

Islam had profound and lasting influence on India. Many people who were discriminated and treated as low castes by the upper castes turned to the new religion. Islam does not accept any differences based on birth or race and advocates a casteless society founded on Islamic brotherhood. The basic teaching of Islam that there is only One God, who is a personal Being also attracted people. The doctrine of a personel God, intimately related to

67. William Logan, op. cit. 294.

68. Cf. P. K. Muhammad Kunji, *Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum*, (Malayalam), Trichur, 1982, pp. 11-57.; William Logan, op. cit. pp. 225-234.

69. Cf. Badru D. Kateregga & David W. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, Michigan, 1980.

human beings was a source of Bhakthi or devotion. Many Hindu reformers accepted teachings from Islam and tried to achieve a synthesis of the two religions. The impact of Islam on architecture, literature, state administration life style etc. are very evident. For the sake of brevity we shall not elaborate these points, but shall quote one or two authors.

Fathullah Mujtabai in his book, *Hindu Muslim Cultural Relations*, writes: "The diffusion of Islam in India had awakened the Hindu masses to a number of facts that were never before so vividly known to them. Its arguments against image worship and polytheism, its strong condemnation of caste discriminations, and its idea that all are equal before the divine grace and none can be deprived of loving and worshipping God, must have been of great attraction to the low caste and outcaste population. This was a serious challenge to the Hindu society, and a group of religious leaders and reformers, beginning with Ramananda (14th century) seem to have been engaged in efforts for averting the threat.But it was with Ramananda and his followers like kabir, and later, Nanak, Dadu, Rajjab and others that the new Bhakti movement took its final shape and became, as Majumdar notes, "the most characteristic feature of the religious evolution of the period."⁷⁰ Further he says: "Hindu and Muslim elements join together to build a mosque or a temple, an 'imambara' or a 'gurudvara',

the 'darbar' of a Sultan or the palace of a 'Raja', with equal coordination and without distinction. The same forms and features of miniature painting serve to depict and illustrate the scenes of love adventures of Rama and Sita, Radha and Krishna, Siva and Parvati, or of Layla and Majnun, Khusraw and Shirin, Yusuf and Zulaykha; and the same tunes and melodies go with the songs that sing the joys and the sorrows of a Hindu singer or a Muslim poet."⁷¹

Dealing with the influence of Islam on India, A. L. Basham writes as follows: "One great religious teacher of medieval India, Kabir (1440-1518), a poor weaver of Varanasi, taught the brotherhood of Hindu and Muslim alike in the fatherhood of God, and opposed idolatry and caste practices, declaring that God was equally to be found in temple and mosque. Later, Nanak(1469-1533), a teacher of the Punjab, taught the same doctrine with even greater force, and founded a new faith, that of the Sikhs, designed to incorporate all that was best of both Hinduism and Islam."⁷²

Tribal Religions

There are many tribes in India, each with its own traditional religion, religious rituals and practices. To discard these religions as primitive or Animism would be a wrong approach. There have been some general studies in this field.⁷³

70. Fathullah Mujtabai *Aspects of Hindu Muslim Cultural Relation*, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 108-109.

71. Ibid. p. 115.

72. A. L. Basham, *op. cit.* p. 481.

73. Cf. Sujata Miri (Edited by), *Religion and Society of North-East India* (Papers presented at a Seminar), New Delhi, 1980; Stephen Fuchs, *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 227-230; 261-68; Sevartham, St. Albert's College Annual Publication, Vol. 7, 1982, Vol. 9, 1984 etc.

Book Reviews

REINHARD ABELN: *Herr, mein Herz steht dir offen. Gebete für ältere Menschen*. 80 pages, DM 9, 50. – ERNST WIEDEMANN: *Menschsein vor Gott. Texte zu einer christlichen Existenz*. 72 pages, DM 7, 20. – RICHARD THALMANN: *Die Erde schlief, als der Himmel sich öffnete. Meditationen für die weihnachtliche Zeit*. 54 pages, DM 10, 50. – *Meitinger Adventskalender. Vom 1. bis 31. Dezember*. Text: ELMAR GRUBER, Gestaltung: JOHANN GRUBER, 7,5×21 cm, DM 7, 90. – *All these titles with* Kyrios-Verlag, 8050 Freising (West Germany).

"O Lord, my heart is open to you", ed. by R. Abeln is a prayer book for older people. The editor collected prayers of different authors, old and new. An inspiring book which would merit imitation. Meditative texts are offered in Wiedemann's "To be Man in Face of God". Thalmann's booklet "The Earth slept when the heaven opened itself" is a meditation which makes the mystery of incarnation living. Following the model of a triptych, we meet on the left side the inhabitants of Bethlehem, emperor Augustus and the shepherds, on the right side Simeon, Anna and the magi, in the centre Joseph, Mary and Jesus. A "timeless" calendar for the period of "Advent" or "Subbara" is presented to us with meditative texts by Elmar Gruber for every day of the month of December. Indeed, a nice idea: suitable to be presented to friends.

J. Madey

Mysterium der Anbetung. Göttliche Liturgie und Stundengebet der Orthodoxen Kirche, herausgegeben von Erzpriester SERGIUS HEITZ, übersetzt und bearbeitet von SUSANNE HAUSAMMANN und SERGIUS HEITZ, Köln: Luthe-Verlag, 1986, 788 pages, DM 72.00

Since the two editions of the Byzantine rite "Missal" has been out of print since long, this new German edition is very welcome. It was subsidized by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cologne and the German Catholic Bishop's Conference and appeared in the series KOINONIA-ORIENS directed by Monsignor Wilhelm Nyssen. The edition was blessed by Archbishop George Wagner of the Russian Orthodox Archdiocese in Western Europe within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and by Metropolitan Augoustinos of Germany, Exarch of Central Europe (Greek Orthodox). After the introduction

Large numbers from among the Santals, Oraons, Mizos, Khasis, Nagas, Garos Rhips, etc. have embraced Christianity during this century. The local church has to study in detail the religious beliefs and culture of these tribes, the way in which they express their faith, their religious

practices, rituals and ceremonies connected with marriage, funeral etc.

Without going into details, our main purpose is to indicate here the need to study the tribal religions, where the tribals are concerned, in view of proper catechesis of the Christian community and adaptation of the liturgy. (contd...)

Mar Abraham Mattam

of the editors follow some indications directed to Orthodox and non-Orthodox faithful on how to behave in an orthodox church. The book contains the ordinary of the divine praises, i. e. of the evening service (hesperinos, vespers), of the morning service (orthros), of the little hours, the prayer of midnight, and the biblical odes. Then follows a proposal of a shortened form of the vigil service in parish churches. The second part of the book is dedicated to the Divine Liturgy. We find the translations of the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, of St. Basil the Great and of the Presanctified Gifts, also called Liturgy of St. Gregory of Rome (+ 604), celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays and a few other days in Lent. The changing texts are given or at least indicated thereafter. The book ends with a bibliography and a useful dictionary of the most important liturgical terms. – The editor has done well in taking the Greek and Slav usages into consideration. As regards the language, it follows too much that of the late Russian priest A. von Maltzew (+ 1915). So it sounds often somehow antiquated. This does not lessen the value of the present edition, although we should prefer, in regard to the "Liturgikon", an edition like that of Metropolitan Neophytos Edelby (Recklinghausen 1967; out of print) which is more limpid and easier to handle.

J. Madey

ALFONS NOSSOL: *Der Mensch braucht Theologie. Ansätze zu einer lebensnahen Glaubensreflexion*, Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 208 pages, sFr 42,00

The author of this book which contains a series of articles he had previously published in different periodicals, is well known as a member of the Secretariat for Christian Unity and of the Joint Orthodox-Catholic Theological Commission. Born in the western part of Upper Silesia in 1932 which was incorporated into Poland after World War II, he made his academic studies in Polish: in this language, he published six theological works. He is professor at the Catholic University of Lublin and director of the newly founded ecumenical institute besides his obligations as the diocesan bishop of his native diocese of Opole or Oppeln. His deliberations are not only meant for the academic circles of professional theologians, but for any educated layman, too. "Man is in need of theology", says the title of our book. Which are the main themes in the thought of Bishop Alfons Nossol? The editor of the book, world famous theologian Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar, makes the following division: "Jesus Christ – Centre of the Faith; Church in the field of vision; To live out of the faith; Guides from within the people of God; All what counts is the man". It is worthwhile to study the topics dealt with in this book, although its reading may not be easy. Anyhow, whoever will take pains in studying it, will certainly gain from it.

J. Madey

KHALID AL WASMI: *Oman entre l'indépendance et l'occupation coloniale. Recherches sur l'histoire moderne d'Oman dans ses relations régionales et internationales* (1789 – 1904). Preface de Simon Jargy. Geneva: Labor et Fides: Publications orientalistes de France, 1986, 287 pages, n. p.

This is the thesis for a doctorate es lettres at the university of Geneva (Switzerland). The author is professor of history at the university of Kuwait and a M. P. since 1981. His research work makes evident a chapter of Asia's history which so far has not been studied. Students of the history of India will certainly be interested in the author's findings in the different archives of Great Britain. A look into his bibliography may incite their urge for knowledge.

J. Madey

News

1. The issue over Auschwitz Convent

The presence of a convent in Auschwitz in Poland has led to religious and political tensions. The Jews consider the presence of the convent on the site of the former concentration camp as offensive. According to an agreement between Catholic and Jewish delegations made in Geneva in February 1987, a study centre was to be built outside the camp area. The nuns could settle themselves there within two years. The proposed centre never came to exist.

In a speech in the Jasna Gora Monastery, Cardinal Jozef Glemp referred to the situation qualifying the convent as a "symbol of the human solidarity which covers the living and the dead." Cardinal Franz Konig, president of the Catholic movement *Pax Christi*, requested the Jews to understand the motives of the Catholic Church. The presence of the nuns is not for christianising Auschwitz. He also requested Polish Catholics to be "more sensitive to the feelings of the Jewish people; if prayer at a particular place is offensive to a whole community, why not say this prayer a few hundred metres further away?" Attempts from both sides are on the way to find a peaceful settlement. (the Tablet)

2. New Exarch for the Ukrainians

Pope John Paul II has named His Excellency Mykhaylo Kuchmyak as the Ap. Exarch for Ukrainian Catholics in Great Britain. The Bishop was formerly auxiliary in Philadelphia.

3. New Catholic Bishop in Byelorussia

Fr. Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz has been named by the Holy Father as Ap. Administrator of Minsk. He will hold pastoral care for the entire republic of Byelorussia. According to a report, almost all the Catholic priests in Byelorussia are Poles including the new Administrator. This appointment is a positive step in the Vatican Diplomacy in Eastern Block countries.

4. New appointments in Czechoslovakia

The appointment of an archbishop, two bishops and one Ap. administrator in Czechoslovakia is another diplomatic success of Vatican. For years these Seats were vacant. The new Hierarchs are Fr. Josef Koukl 62, as bishop of Litomerice, Fr. Frantisek Tondra 53, as bishop of Spis, Fr. Frantisak Vanak, 73, as Ap. Administrator in Olomouc, and Bp. Jan Sokol, 54, promoted to the rank of Archbishop of Trnava.

5. Delegation of Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in Rome

Metropolitan Bartholomew of Philadelphia led a delegation of Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to Rome. In a special audience given to the delegation by the pope, the Metropolitan delivered the message from the Patriarch Dimitrios I and the Holy Father replied. In his address the Holy Father said, "we know, that we are only earthen vessels which contain the treasure of the Gospel of salvation, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us (2 cor. 4:7)". The Holy Father expressed the hope of being able to share the same Eucharistic sacrament of the unity of the Body of Christ.

In his message, His Beatitude the Patriarch Dimitrios I said: we listen to the call so that we all keep, uncontaminated, the Apostolic faith and Apostolic tradition that guarantee our unity with the primitive Church. Thus by being united with the Apostles, we may guarantee the truth!

6. Diocese of Kalyan, India completes one year

The diocese of Kalyan is the first of its kind in India with unique mission. Its establishment was officially announced on May 19, 1988. It is unique because it is the first diocese established outside Kerala for the pastoral care of the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Oriental Church. In their search for employment, these oriental catholics were without a shepherd of their own church for so many years. August 24, 1988 is a day to be written in golden letters in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church. It was on that day the Diocese of Kalyan with its new Bishop Mar Paul Chittilapilly was formally inaugurated. On August 24, 1989 it completed one year of service. The anniversary was formally celebrated in a hall in Bombay, since the new diocese does not have either its own Cathedral or any church. In the meeting that followed a concelebrated Liturgy, many distinguished people participated. Cardinal Simon Pimenta congratulated the diocese and its bishop for the wonderful achievements within a short period of one year. He promised co-operation though practical difficulties in sharing Latin Churches for liturgical celebration for the orientals do exist. His Eminence called for unity of action. Bishop Mar Chittilapilly called for support from all parts to implement the decision of Pope, and requested all concerned for mutual understanding and to respect the principle of unity in diversity.

The new diocese has achieved a lot within a short period. When the new bishop took over the pastoral care of the new diocese, it had only 7 priests and 45 centres of mass once a month. Now it has 33 priests and 107 centres of mass; 11 religious communities with 43 sisters. Parish councils are formed in 80 centres with 12-15 members in each centre. About 1000 lay leaders are already in active apostolate. There are 12 zonal centres with a minimum of 25 members to coordinate the activities in each zone. At present there are 300 zonal leaders. Each zonal centre sends 2 representatives to the Pastoral Council which with 40 members forms consultative body to help the bishop. May the new diocese move forward overcoming all sorts of difficulties in its way.